



*The History of the  
Government Printing Office*





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HISTORY OF THE  
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

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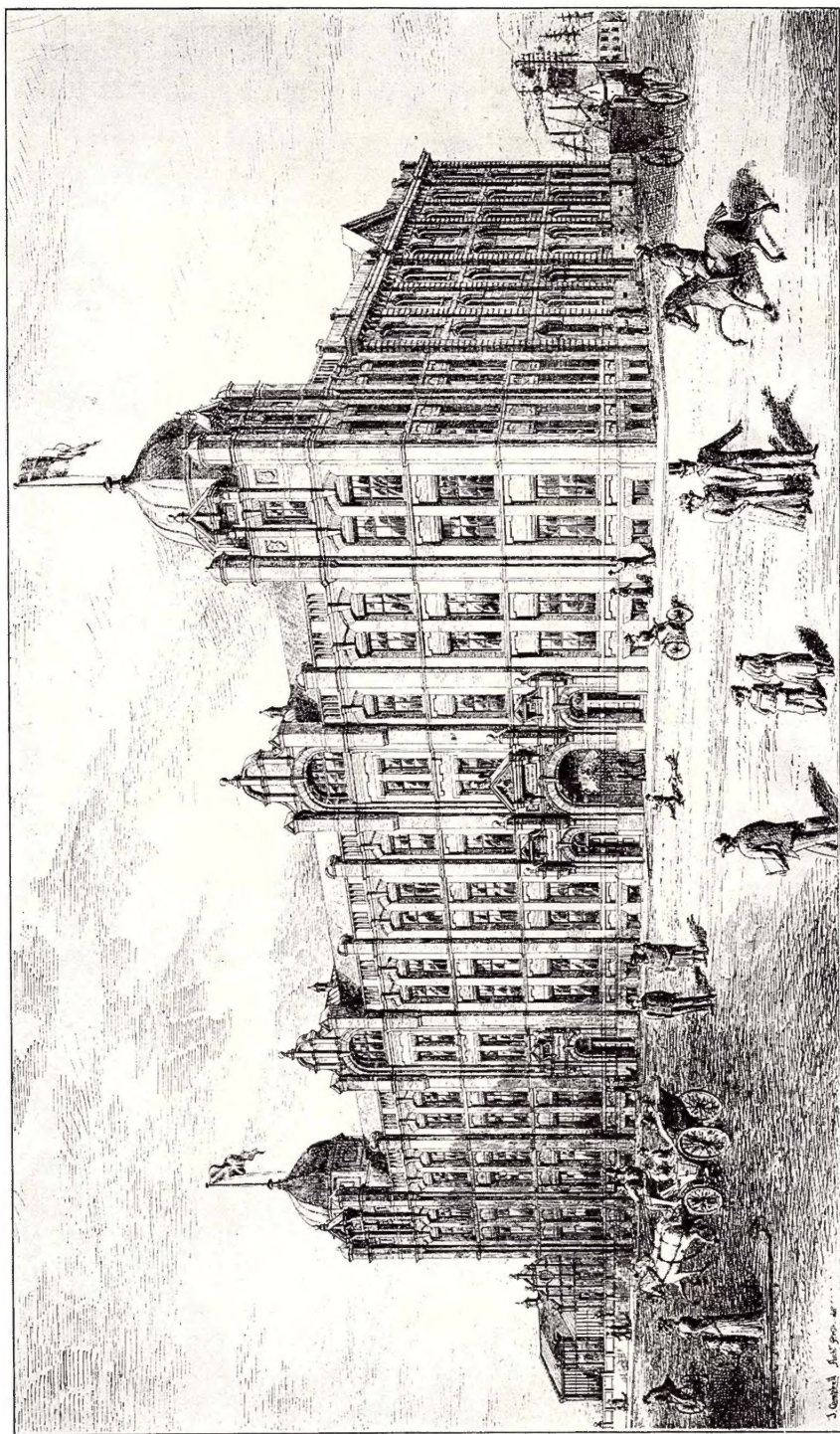
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Government Printing Office, Wellington, c. 1897 – from a pen and ink drawing by J. Campbell



# HISTORY OF THE GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

by

W. A. GLUE



1966

R. E. OWEN, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, WELLINGTON  
NEW ZEALAND

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## FOREWORD

Little could my predecessors, Christopher Fulton, Joseph Wilson and the others who followed, have imagined the tremendous growth in volume and variety of the work performed by the Government Printing Office as it is today. Little could they have imagined the change from manual methods, candlelight, and the horse and buggy, to the photographic, electronic, and computerised methods of the space age, all in the short span of 100 years.

However, it is evident that the basic need has changed little with the passing of the years, as, in a report dated 30 August 1862, a Select Committee of the House recommended, *inter alia*, "Your Committee are of opinion that an establishment fit in every respect to perform all the work required for the various Departments of the Government in a satisfactory and creditable way, must be large, well stocked with Type, supplied with a variety of fittings and provided with valuable and bulky machinery."

As I read this excellent history, I often felt that I could have been "sitting in" with many of my predecessors as Mr Glue revealed their trials and tribulations, and their achievements and triumphs. Even in recent times, many of the problems they encountered, such as "inadequate accommodation" and "rapidly increasing demands," have had to be faced again.

However, these recurring problems have been on a far greater scale, due to the growth in population, the development and extension of services by Government, and the increasing complexity of modern administration. To meet the situation, we have in recent years introduced new techniques and high-production plant; and also decentralised some activities to provide better and faster services in certain areas.

What of the future? Mr Glue's historical survey tells how my predecessors laid the foundations of a respected, important Department of State. In this rapidly-changing and troubled world, and with our population continuing to increase, it is inevitable that there will be even greater calls on the Government Printing Office to produce vast quantities of printed material at short notice. I am certain that the future will bring further notable changes and expansion. We of the present day are planning ahead in the hope that we too can leave sound foundations for the benefit of those who follow.

ROY E. OWEN  
*Government Printer*





## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My main debt is to Mr E. L. Turner, a former member of the staff of the Government Printing Office, who assembled a set of the Printing Office's annual reports and made notes to fill gaps where some were missing. He also compiled a chronology which was a useful guide and collected a wealth of miscellaneous material which was invaluable in rounding out the narrative. Miss Judy Hornabrook of National Archives, the Parliamentary Librarian (Mr J. O. Wilson) and his staff, and the reference staff of the Alexander Turnbull Library were generous in granting access to their records and helpful in tracing material not easily found.

Gaps in the records are my excuse for the gaps in this narrative. In a Department as chronically cramped for space as the Government Printing Office has been throughout most of its life, it is inevitable that the eyes of administrators should turn to the space occupied by files. Some of the records that survived are now held by National Archives, but many more have been destroyed.

Mr W. F. ("Scotty") Sinclair, a former member of the staff of the Printing Office and an old friend, lent me *A History of Printing in New Zealand, 1830-1940*, edited by R. A. McKay, which contains an excellent brief history of the Government Printing Office. This account was written, anonymously, by K. B. Longmore, a former member of the staff. The Chief Administration Officer, Mr E. C. Keating, read my typescript and answered a host of questions; several other members of the staff gave help when called on or offered suggestions; and in the printing stage Mr R. P. Craig and Mrs J. F. Swann of the Copy Supervising Section offered constructive criticism. Mr Craig also arranged and captioned the photographs.

Many of the photographs were collected by Mr Turner and others came from Printing Office archives. Mr F. O'Leary of the Dominion Museum and the staff of the Photographic Section of the Turnbull Library found others not available elsewhere or produced better prints for reproduction. The more recent photographs were taken by National Publicity Studios photographers. Mrs C. Port, the daughter of a former Government Printer, Mr G. H. Loney, lent at short notice a portrait of her father, and the portrait of Mr E. V. Paul was obtained from S. P. Andrew Ltd.

Miss Elsie Janes of the Historical Publications Branch, whose interest in the history of the Printing Office is heightened by family association and long experience in the typing of manuscripts for the printer, typed my manuscript. Mrs M. Fogarty compiled the index. I am grateful for their patient assistance.

W. A. GLUE

WELLINGTON,  
*April 1966*

HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS BRANCH,  
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## Chapter 1

### NEW ZEALAND'S FIRST PRINTER

"Till late that night there were lights in the windows of the printing office, where Colenso was busy compositing and printing the circular letter to the chiefs of the Federation . . . and the proclamation by Hobson of his assumption of the office of Governor. . . . One hundred each of these papers were struck off, to be dispatched next morning to the chiefs."<sup>1</sup>

WILLIAM COLENZO, New Zealand's first printer, busily working overtime at the Church Missionary Society's press at Paihia on the night of 29 January 1840, had a rush job to do for the Lieutenant-Governor: two proclamations, 100 copies of each, and a circular calling on the Maori chiefs to assemble at Waitangi were to be ready by the morning.

The job was done on time and the printer's charges were reasonable. Colenso recorded them in his ledger for 30 January:<sup>2</sup>

To compositing & printing 100 fcap. 4to circulars for assembling native chiefs at Waitangi	12	0
2½ quires foolscap paper for same @ 2/-	4	6
To compositing & printing 100 foolscap folio Proclamations declaring Capt. H's appointmt. etc. <sup>3</sup> ..	1	1 0
2½ quires foolscap for ditto	4	6
To compositing & printing 100 foolscap folio Proclamations, declaring agt. all future purchases of land, etc.	1	1 0
2½ quires paper for same	4	6

Colenso's press was not the first to be used in New Zealand. In August 1830 the Rev. William Yate brought back from Sydney a press sent out from England by the Church Missionary Society.

<sup>1</sup>A. G. Bagnall and G. C. Petersen, *William Colenso, His Life and Journeys* (1948), p. 90.

<sup>2</sup>Ledger of the Printing Office at Paihia, 1836-42, copy typed from the original by G. C. Petersen, December 1948; held by Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>3</sup>This proclamation is reproduced on p. 68.

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With the help of an apprentice, James Smith, aged 15, Yate on 1 September 1830 printed a few hymn sheets in Maori. He followed these tentative efforts with a six-page catechism, also in Maori, a specimen of which Yate sent to the Society with a letter of thanks and the optimistic forecast "that we shall be able in a short time to manage it". These hopes proved false, and the press lay idle at Kerikeri for some time before it was sold to a Sydney printer.<sup>1</sup>

Colenso arrived at Paihia on 30 December 1834, and his heavy press – a Stanhope hand press – and boxes of type were lightered ashore by the Maoris early in the New Year with picnic enthusiasm. Everyone – missionary and native alike – was anxious to set the press to work, and within a few weeks the first booklet emerged. It was a slim volume of 16 pages, a first edition of 25 presentation copies of the Rev. William Williams's translation in Maori of Paul's epistle to the Philippians and Ephesians, bound in covers of pink blotting paper. Colenso pulled the first proofs on 17 February 1835 before an expectant crowd of missionaries and their wives and an admiring gallery of curious and excited natives. Later 2,000 copies of the booklet were printed and bound in more permanent form.

Colenso also printed the first copies of the Treaty of Waitangi, the original of which was drawn up in manuscript in Maori and signed by the assembled chiefs on 6 February 1840. On 17 February he was commissioned to print 200 copies. This presented no difficulties as he had earlier designed his type cases for composing in Maori.<sup>2</sup>

Hobson's proclamation of 21 May 1840 vesting in Her Majesty Queen Victoria "the full Sovereignty of the Islands of New-Zealand" was also printed by Colenso. Unfortunately there was a mistake in the "copy" and the job had to be done again. The draft referred to the area covered by New Zealand as "extending from Thirty-four Degrees Thirty Minutes *North*<sup>3</sup> to Forty-seven Degrees Ten Minutes South Latitude. . . ." The alert Colenso, in the tradition of all good printing craftsmen, noticed the error; but as the Government office was at Okiato, on the other side of the harbour from Paihia, "and it was also the winter & stormy season",<sup>4</sup> Colenso apparently decided to "follow copy".<sup>5</sup> When sending the

<sup>1</sup>Dr T. M. Hocken, "Some Account of the Beginnings of Literature in New Zealand", a paper read before the Otago Institute on 11 September 1900 and published in the *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute*, Vol. 33, 1900.

<sup>2</sup>See photograph on p. 75. To meet a shortage of "h's" he cut off the bottom curves of some italic "b's". English consonants not used in Maori were removed from the cases, an arrangement which sometimes proved inconvenient when he was setting an English text.

<sup>3</sup>Author's italics.

<sup>4</sup>Bagnall and Petersen, *op. cit.*, p. 457.

<sup>5</sup>Alternatively, he might not have noticed the error until after the job was printed.

proclamation to the Government he pointed out that the first "North" should read "South"; the proclamation was then cancelled and another substituted.

On 15 June 1840 the *New Zealand Advertiser and Bay of Islands Gazette* commenced publication at Kororareka; it took over from the Church Missionary Society press the burden of publishing Governor Hobson's notices and proclamations. In the first number a notice from Government House announced "that all communications from this Government inserted in the *New Zealand Advertiser and Bay of Islands Gazette* are to be deemed official". This arrangement lasted only a few months. The editor, the Rev. B. Quaife, grew increasingly critical of Hobson's administration and eventually refused the Government access to his columns. Retaliation was swift; Quaife was directed to appear before the Colonial Secretary and the paper was suspended, the last issue, No. 27, being published on 10 December 1840.

Hobson again called on Colenso for help and, in a letter dated 24 December, thanked the printer for "the very laudable zeal you have already displayed in support of the views of H.M. Government".

Six days later the first *New Zealand Government Gazette - Gazette Extraordinary*, New Zealand, No. 1 - appeared. The job is systematically recorded in the printer's ledger:

Decr. 30

Compositing "Gazette Extraordinary" No. 1,	
4 pages demy 4to., 12 columns type	£6 6 0
Printing 150 copies of same	18 0
3½ quires demy paper for ditto. @ 2/6	8 9
	<hr/>
	£7 12 9 <sup>1</sup>

The first notice in the *Gazette Extraordinary* made public the Government's quarrel with the *Advertiser*. The notice read:

"Notice is hereby given, that in consequence of the Editors of 'The New Zealand Advertiser and Bay of Islands Gazette' having declined publishing any Advertisements for Her Majesty's Government, all communications from this Government inserted in the 'GAZETTE EXTRAORDINARY' are to be deemed Official.

Given under my hand at Government House, RUSSELL, this 24th Day of December, in the Year of our Lord 1840.

WILLIAM HOBSON,  
Lieutenant-Governor."

<sup>1</sup>The bill was not paid by the Government until October 1841.

Colenso's willingness to undertake these Government commissions, for which incidentally he received no remuneration, did not pass without criticism from his fellow missionaries. ". . . we must ever keep in view the Holy purposes for which the Printing press was sent to this Country, and not suffer its progress to be so retarded as to hinder our printing . . . the necessary supply of Books for the use of the Mission," the Committee of Missionaries of the Northern District of New Zealand wrote to him on 31 December 1840. In future all orders for printing required by the Government, or by other parties, were first to be sanctioned by the committee. Colenso reported these instructions to the Colonial Secretary on 9 January 1841, after which no further work was done for the Government on the mission press.

*The Kororareka Gazette, 1841*

On the suppression of the *New Zealand Advertiser* its publisher, Geoffrey Eagar, sought permission to carry on a jobbing office at Kororareka. He proposed to publish "a small *gratis* Gazette", filling up space with advertisements and a shipping report. He assured the Colonial Secretary on 15 January 1841 that this publication would not be deemed "as coming under the denomination of a Newspaper", and closed his letter contritely: "Should I be again favoured with the Government Printing it will be my invariable study to give every satisfaction to His Excellency, and prove myself deserving of the trust reposed in me."

In view of his printing difficulties Hobson had already sought help from Australia, and an advertisement seeking tenders from Australian printers for the printing of the *New Zealand Government Gazette* had been dispatched for inclusion in the *New South Wales Government Gazette*. Eagar was told on 5 February that he could, if he wished, submit a tender for publishing this *Gazette*; and that in the meantime, until the tenders were opened, he could publish the *Gazette* he had suggested. Spurred on, perhaps, by the prospect of competition from Australia, he was commendably prompt with his proposals. "I hereby agree with Her Majesty's Government for printing and publishing the 'New Zealand Government Gazette' on a sheet of demy 4<sup>to</sup> once or twice a week – with permission for inserting all private advertisements – a Shipping and Market Report – with occasional notices of Domestic occurrences – the Government paying for the insertion of all Notices at the rate of two shillings and sixpence for the first twelve lines, and twopence



per line for all above, each insertion," he wrote, a little breathlessly, on 8 February. Hobson approved these proposals on the same day.

On 27 February a notice was published in the *New South Wales Government Gazette* seeking tenders for printing the *New Zealand Government Gazette* at Auckland. John Moore, ex-foreman of the *Monitor*, and his partner, Abraham Dombain, both of Sydney, were the only tenderers. Their price for printing 250 copies of the *Gazette* once a week was 15s. per page, plus an additional 5s. for every page composed of figures and rules – in printers' language, "rule work". If two issues a week were required, the rate was 20s. per page and 5s. extra for rule work. The tenderers pointed out in a covering letter that this price was higher than that charged for the printing of the *New South Wales Gazette*, for which the contractor had the advantages of an established printing office and the services, in the early days, of two or three assigned prisoners and several apprentices.

A contract was signed in March, and a substantial bond entered into by both partners for its observance. It was left to Hobson to determine whether the *New Zealand Government Gazette* was to be printed once or twice a week, as well as the day and time of publication. The contract was for one year only, due to expire in March 1842; but the Governor of New South Wales, Sir George Gipps, recommended its continuance for a further year should it be satisfactorily performed – "and the Parties are proceeding to New Zealand in the expectation that, on this condition, it will be so continued".

In May, a few weeks after their arrival in New Zealand, Moore and Dombain sold their press and plant to the Auckland Newspaper and General Printing Co. Moore was employed by the company as superintendent of its printing office, Dombain as clerk. At their request the contract was relinquished and a new contract made with the trustees of the company.

In the meantime Eggar continued to publish his *Gazette* at Kororareka. It was issued weekly, at first on Friday afternoons, later on Thursdays. The *New Zealand Government Gazette* No. 2 (Colenso's was No. 1) first appeared on 19 February 1841. Eggar's hand is less sure than Colenso's, his pages crowded, his type sometimes too bold or ornate.<sup>1</sup> The contents are sometimes surprising. In No. 12 "a party of Gentlemen" meet at dinner to do honour to

<sup>1</sup>Dr Hocken comments: "It will be noticed what a contrast there is between the excellent paper and good workmanship of Mr. Colenso's No. 1 and the rotten rags and poor execution of Her Majesty's printer." Eggar's spelling was sometimes uncertain and his use of apostrophes erratic – one notice, several times repeated, reported the theft of "a Ladie's Gold Watch".

Captain Hobson, "our Governor and Commander-in-Chief".<sup>1</sup> The guests are named and the speeches given in full: "The Chairman now called for bumpers – rose to propose the Toast of the Day, and spoke as follows."

No. 13 contained Hobson's proclamations of 3 May and concluded with some outspoken criticism of one of Her Majesty's public servants. "A Jack-in-office at our Custom-House has had the impudence to dictate to us the course we should pursue 'in his opinion' as to the management of our 'Gazette!' ", the publisher announced indignantly. "He has actually refused to give our messenger the Shipping List (which has invariably been copied from the Custom house books) for insertion on the 'Gazette' for the information of the public at large. If he does not immediately comply with the prescribed rules in the other Colonies on this point, we shall appeal to the respected head of the Department on the subject. We hate being personal: but when a dolt – such as the conceited individual alluded to – has the presumption to give his opinion on a matter which does not concern him – very probably, perhaps, leaving the other duties of his office as well as the Shipping List unattended to – we cannot refrain from bringing his conduct before the public."

The first *Gazettes* were certainly not the staid documents they are today.

Eagar's name last appears in the imprint of *Gazette* No. 19 of 15 July 1841, which was apparently the last to be published in the Bay of Islands.

### *The Government Buys a Printing Office*

By this time the capital was firmly established in Auckland. It was logical that the Government's printing should be done where its decisions were made; and accordingly the *New Zealand Government Gazette*, the medium through which those decisions were promulgated, was transferred from the Bay of Islands to the new capital.

The Government's contract with the Auckland Newspaper and General Printing Co. was signed in July 1841, and *Gazette* No. 1 appeared on the seventh. Its first notice is a direction from His Excellency the Governor that the *New Zealand Government Gazette* will be published officially on Wednesday of each week. "The Heads of the several Departments," the notice ran, "will be pleased

<sup>1</sup>On 3 May 1841 Hobson had proclaimed the creation of New Zealand as a separate colony independent of New South Wales and his appointment by the Queen as Governor and Commander-in-Chief.

to observe, that it will be necessary to transmit to the Colonial Secretary, by twelve o'clock on Saturday, whatever is intended for publication on the succeeding Wednesday." Moore's name appears in the imprint.

Until 30 March 1842 the *Gazette* was "Printed and Published by John Moore, for the Trustees of the Auckland Newspaper and General Printing Company". In issue No. 20 of 1 December 1841 the company's trustees took the opportunity, "having heard some reports detrimental to the pecuniary affairs of the Company", to publish a summary of its balance sheet.

Perhaps there was truth in these rumours after all, for on 29 March the trustees offered the Government their premises, printing plant, and type for the sum of £1,500. The offer was conditional on the Government's employing the company's staff of six, including Moore, until the completion of their respective engagements. Moore's contract, and most of the others' engagements, had seven months to run. If the Government accepted the offer the stock on hand, valued at approximately £150, was to be purchased at valuation.

The trustees enclosed an inventory of their plant and material. They ranged from a Super Royal Stanhope press and 3,000 lb of type to candle holders and "an assortment of beautiful borders". A board of survey inspected the premises and plant; they assessed their value at £1,350, including the stock, and observed that the roof of the building was defective and would require "reparation".

For the period from 7 July 1841 to 31 March 1842, Government printing for all Departments had cost £1,298 14s. From these figures the Colonial Secretary, Willoughby Shortland, estimated that the cost for a complete year would reach £1,948, £348 more than the year's estimates. "Even at the present expense the quantity of Printing performed is not at all equal to what is actually required," he reported to Governor Hobson. The Government had been "much inconvenienced" by printing delays. "Taking these circumstances into consideration, I am of opinion that it would be very advisable to form a Government Printing Establishment and that a considerable saving would be effected thereby." In two years, he estimated, the money saved by the Government through establishing its own printing press would repay its entire cost.

Shortland wrote his memorandum early in April – the day has been trimmed off the file copy – but on the fourth he received a letter from John Moore offering to do any printing the Government might require for the next six months "at half the present contract price", provided he was allowed to do some printing on his own account. Moore was then the proprietor of the Auckland *Standard*,



an unhappy venture which lasted only a few months, and he hoped to combine the Government printing with the publication of this paper.

On the eighth Governor Hobson agreed that the Government should buy the printing establishment, including its stock, for the sum of £1,425. This offer was accepted by the company. Hobson also accepted Moore's offer, but directed Shortland to make the condition that the Government's printing should take precedence over any other work and be not subjected to delays, "the obviation of which was one principal reason for the purchase of the materials from the Printing Company". Moore was also to make arrangements for the payment of the men employed by the company so as to relieve the Government of any responsibility on that score.

Shortland's letter was sent on 15 April, and next day the Colonial Storekeeper, Henry Tucker, was instructed to take charge of the premises. Moore had continued with the Government printing during these negotiations, and the *Gazette* published on 6 April 1842 carries the imprint, "Printed and Published by John Moore, at the Printing Office, High-street". A week later the words "and Published" are deleted; no reason is given.

The Government's arrangement with John Moore was never a happy one. Some stationery and ink vanished during the period of the changeover and some missing type was later found in Moore's possession.<sup>1</sup> Hobson was not happy with the arrangement whereby Moore enjoyed the "privilege . . . of private Printing" or with his proposal to buy some of the type which he said would not be required for the Government's work. Moore had trouble with some of his staff ("the Printers very often neglected their work by getting drunk for which I punished them by having them put into prison"); his pressman was alleged to have stolen paper and sold it to the local grocer. Moore's relations with William Leech, a member of the Colonial Secretary's staff, were most unfriendly, and it was hardly surprising that the Government refused to renew the agreement when the six months expired on 30 September 1842, in spite of alternative proposals submitted by Moore or his protest that the Governor's decision inflicted "great hardship" on him.

Hobson died on 10 September and Moore vacated the premises at the end of the month. His last service for the Governor was to print an inscription which was to be placed on his coffin, and in making this impression he cracked the bed of the press. He was required to pay the cost of repairs (30s.).

<sup>1</sup>Moore was charged with larceny; but on a ruling from the Attorney-General that it would be difficult to prove "a felonious intent", the matter was settled by arbitration. The Government got back most of its type.

## Chapter 2

# THE FIRST GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

WITH an introductory flourish the Government announced the establishment of its official press as from 1 October 1842. The *Gazette* of 5 October ("Printed at the Government Press") stated that arrangements had been made for publishing, "under the inspection of the Government, the Official Paper hitherto printed by contract, intituled '*The New Zealand Government Gazette*'." The heads of Government Departments were again given the quaintly phrased reminder that the deadline for their "copy" was three o'clock on Saturdays, and the appointment of William Leech, of the Colonial Secretary's Office, "to whom all charges on account of the *Government Gazette* are, for the present, to be paid", as superintendent of the "Government Printing Establishment" was announced.

An early advertisement invited tenders for the purchase of a quantity of type and other printing materials, "the property of Government". Application for particulars was to be made to Mr Leech, "who will cause them [type and materials] to be shewn to parties who may be desirous of tendering". The loan of some of this type to one Auckland newspaper in December 1843 was trenchantly criticised as "jobbing" in the correspondence columns of an opposition journal.<sup>1</sup>

Until September 1844 all Government publications bore the imprint: "Auckland - Printed and Published at the Government Press". No one was named as printer. Philip Kunst was later described as "managing printer to the first Government Printing Establishment in 1842 and 1843",<sup>2</sup> and he was apparently succeeded by Christopher Fulton, the compositor. William Chisholm Wilson, later contractor for Government printing in the fifties and early sixties, was also a member of the staff. Kunst was later printer to the *Southern Cross*, and Wilson was the founder of the *New Zealand Herald*.

<sup>1</sup>The *Southern Cross*, 6 January 1844, 10 and 17 August 1844.

<sup>2</sup>Appendix to Journals, House of Representatives, 1858, F. 3.

On 16 September Christopher Fulton was appointed Government Printer, the appointment being backdated to 1 July 1844. It brought him no increase in salary, a minute to that effect being signed by Governor Robert FitzRoy.

Less than two years later – on 31 March 1846 – the Government Printing Office was closed down. Administrative failure and skirmishes with hostile Maori tribes had so depleted the colony's exchequer that retrenchment became necessary. Within a few months of his taking office, Governor Grey directed that "the Printing office must be broken up from the conclusion of this Quarter" (his memorandum to the Colonial Secretary was dated 4 February 1846), and that the Government's printing was in future to be done by contract. The type was not to be sold for the present, however, until the relative expense of printing by contract compared with the cost of the Government's own press had been tested.

Tenders for the work were invited by advertisement in the *Government Gazette* of 9 February, and Fulton was told that his appointment was to be terminated. He was one of the colony's first public servants to become a victim of Government retrenchment. A letter on the twenty-fifth from the Colonial Secretary, Andrew Sinclair, expressed the Government's satisfaction with the skill, industry, and fidelity he had shown during his management of the Printing Office.

Although less stormy than that of his predecessor, John Moore, Fulton's departure from the Printing Office was not without controversy. He claimed that he had not been given sufficient notice of the termination of his services and wrote to Grey requesting a gratuity of three months' salary, which he reported was the custom in Australia. A few weeks after his dismissal he lost the use of his right arm when the accidental discharge of a gun shattered his elbow. The occupation of printer was thus barred to him, and his letter to Grey, beautifully written by some unnamed scribe and signed by Fulton with a cross, paints a gloomy picture of his future. But he had had other irons in the fire during his career as a public servant, and was alleged by Sinclair to have used his position as Government Printer to insert an advertisement in the Maori *Gazette* asking sellers of "Cowdie Gum" to call on him at the Printing Office. He had been admonished for this indiscretion.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Fulton was also in trouble on another occasion. In addressing an envelope containing *Gazettes* to the editor of the *New Zealander*, Charles Terry, he once prefixed the initials O.L.D. to Terry's surname. Terry wrote to Governor FitzRoy stating that he had received a "premeditated, unwarrantable, unprovoked insult from a subordinate officer of the Government"; he asked for a "full unqualified apology for his flagrant



"In the present state of the Colonial finances" Grey did not feel justified in approving Fulton's application for a gratuity without reference to the Lords of Her Majesty's Treasury. Another letter, supported by testimonials to the quality of Fulton's work as Government Printer, was dispatched, but their Lordships refused to grant his application.

### *Printing Under Contract*

The successful contractor – to return to the Government's printing – was John Williamson, a former member of the staff of the Auckland Newspaper and General Printing Co. under Moore and more recently the founder of the *New Zealander*. The Government was now taking no risks with its printing contractors, and the new contract was most careful to specify detailed charges for various types of work and to impose penalties for possible breaches. In the first place Williamson, with two Auckland merchants as securities, was required to enter into a bond of £200 by which he undertook to "well and truly observe, perform, fulfil and keep" his contract and agreement. He was to print and publish 200 copies each of the *New Zealand Government Gazette*, the ordinances and minutes of the Legislative Council, and 100 copies of the *Maori Gazette*. He was to forfeit the sum of £5 of "lawful English money" if he failed to deliver these publications within 24 hours of their being printed; another £5 if he failed to attend to the directions given for a proof or to any revision required; and he would forfeit £20 should the subject-matter of any document entrusted to him for insertion in any of these publications be made public by him or by any member of his staff previous to its distribution. The contract was for 12 months, and the Government's printing was to have priority over all other work.

For the next 18 years the work was done by contract. Williamson held the contract for two years, during which the *Gazette* was printed at the *New Zealander* office in Auckland. Its date of publication was erratic, though it usually appeared at approximate

impertinence". Fulton's explanation that he did not know Terry's christian name, that the *Gazettes* were dispatched "in great hurry", and that the addition was not meant as an insult was thought unsatisfactory by the Colonial Secretary and by the Governor. Fulton was directed by the Governor to apologise "for the rude impertinence complained of – failing which he will lose his situation". This he duly did, not altogether to the satisfaction of Terry, who considered the explanation "a paltry subterfuge" and the Government Printer's letter "no apology at all".

However, to record an entry on the credit side of the ledger, Fulton received from Governor FitzRoy on 12 February 1846 a testimonial stating that he had conducted all the printing for the Government during FitzRoy's term as Governor "highly to my satisfaction".

monthly intervals. Williamson was joined in partnership in January 1848 by W. C. Wilson.

The new firm of Williamson and Wilson published its first *Gazette* on New Year's Day 1848, a day which introduced a major constitutional change in the colony. Grey was now Governor-in-Chief, responsible for the broad administration of the colony, which by his proclamation of 10 March 1848 was divided into two provinces, New Ulster in the north, New Munster in the south.<sup>1</sup> Each province published its own separate *Gazette*.

The *Gazette* for the southern province of New Munster was published in Wellington. Its first issue appeared on 17 August 1847, "Printed at the Office of the Wellington Independent, Lambton Quay". Its printers began inauspiciously by omitting the "g" in the Wellington dateline, an error which was corrected in the second number on 3 September. This issue added the words "(Southern Province)" in parentheses under the title *New Zealand Government Gazette* and produced a new version of Queen Victoria's royal arms. Issue No. 4 of 9 October produced yet another version of the Royal Arms, with the Lion and the Unicorn *couchant* and in profile; it was now printed at the *Spectator* office.

After six issues the description "(Southern Province)" gave way in the heading to "(Province of New Munster)". The *Spectator* and the *Independent* continued to alternate as printers of the *Gazette* as each in turn secured the Government contract. The first contract was for three months, then six months, and then later for 12 months; and the frequent changes may explain the printers' indecision as to the style and wording of their imprints. The contract advertised on 15 June 1848 specified 200 copies of the *Gazette*, at a rate per sheet; Government forms were also printed by the successful contractor.

Separate gazettes for the two provinces were discontinued early in 1853, that for New Munster (printed by the *Spectator*) ceasing on 28 February and that for New Ulster (Williamson and Wilson) on 2 April. Volume I, No. 1, of the *New Zealand Government Gazette* appeared on 10 March 1853 and ceased with No. 26 on 15 November. All were printed in Wellington by the *Spectator*.

Publication of the *New Zealand Government Gazette* was transferred from Wellington to Auckland in November 1853, the first number being published on the seventeenth. It was incorrectly numbered

<sup>1</sup>These names had originally been used in the "charter" of 1840 to distinguish the North and South Islands; Stewart Island was New Leinster.

26 although it followed Wellington's No. 26, and its pagination duplicated 10 pages already printed in the last Wellington issue.<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime the Printing Office's plant in Auckland lay neglected. Fulton, apparently still interested in printing in spite of his damaged arm, applied to the Colonial Secretary in February 1847 to rent the press and types, but his request was refused. Other applicants were also refused: "The Government have no intention to let their type or in any manner to dispose of it." A visitor to the building in August 1850 noted the "ruinous condition" of the materials, and being a conscientious public servant he reported to his superior, the Colonial Secretary. "Many expensive articles were scattered about on the floor," he wrote on 10 August, "and were already much injured by having been trodden on; and the Types, so far as could be perceived by the imperfect light, appeared to be lying about in great disorder. . . . It is absolutely necessary, however, for their preservation, that some measures should be speedily taken to set them in order, or they will soon become worthless." Various inroads on the stock of type and furniture had also been made by borrowing. One of Williamson and Wilson's men was employed to tidy up the building, the job taking him 12 days, itself an indication of the extent of the disorder.

Williamson and Wilson remained the official printing contractors for the New Zealand Government until 28 January 1857. The next two issues of the *Gazette*, printed at the *New Zealander* office, Auckland, carry no names in the imprint. Then on 4 March the name of W. C. Wilson appears as its printer.<sup>2</sup> This imprint was later changed to "Auckland:—Printed by W. C. Wilson, for the New Zealand Government", and in this form, with some minor variations and additions, it remained until 28 June 1862.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>There is good reason for Dr Hocken's comment that these *Gazettes* are "extremely puzzling to collate". — *A Bibliography of the Literature relating to New Zealand* (1909), introduction, p. vi.

<sup>2</sup>The dropping of Williamson's name from the imprint was probably due to his election as Superintendent of Auckland Province in November 1856.

<sup>3</sup>Two mysteries have not been explained. The *Gazettes* of 12 and 26 July 1862, printed on blue paper instead of the usual white, bear the imprint: "Printed and published by N. Sutherland, for the New Zealand Government, at the Printing Office, Lambton Quay." White paper was used again on 6 August, still with Sutherland's imprint. On 20 August and 6 September the *Gazettes* were "Printed and Published under the authority of the New Zealand Government, by Robert Stokes, of the City of Wellington, Government Printer for the time being." This was nearly two years before the Government Printing Office was established in Auckland, and over two and a half years before it moved to Wellington. Two *Gazettes* in September and October carry no imprint, but the *Gazette* dated 22 October 1862 is again printed at Auckland by W. C. Wilson.



Wilson resumed the contract in October 1862 and continued to do the Government's printing at the *New Zealander* office until September 1863, when his partnership with John Williamson was dissolved. The contract did not expire until the end of the year, and Wilson's relinquishment of it just before the start of the approaching session of the General Assembly caused some inconvenience. After some negotiation Wilson was offered the position of Government Printer. "The opportunity of engaging the services of so experienced and energetic a manager as Mr Wilson is one which should on no account be lost," the Prime Minister, Alfred Domett, wrote on 3 September 1863. The success of the "experiment" – the establishment of the Government's own press – would be ensured by such an engagement, he considered.

Wilson's former partner was prepared to sell the Government all the printing materials it required for its own press, and it seemed that the Government's difficulties were near solution. Unfortunately there was already a complication. The Postmaster-General, the Hon. Crosbie Ward, had already been asked (on 4 July)<sup>1</sup> to obtain press and type and a printer in England; if he was successful, the Government could conceivably have two printing establishments on its hands.<sup>2</sup> However, the problem did not arise. Domett resigned office on 30 October, Wilson established the *New Zealand Herald* a fortnight later, and the search for a Government Printer began again.

During these negotiations tenders were invited for the Government's work for the next 12 months. The tenderers were given due warning that "in the event of the Government establishing a Printing Press of their own" during that period the contract would be terminated at once. The new contractors were Robert J. Creighton and Alfred Scales, proprietors of the *Daily Southern Cross*, Auckland's first daily paper. They printed the *New Zealand Gazette* – the word Government had been dropped from the title since September 1857 – until 30 July 1864, when the Government Printing Office was established. It has continued to the present day.

<sup>1</sup>See p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Domett, looking ahead, planned to resell any equipment bought in England.



### *Chapter 3*

## PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATIONS

IN 1855 a Committee was appointed by the House of Representatives "to consider the best method of conducting the Printing of the House." In its report the Committee expressed the opinion that "a great saving" in the expense of printing would be effected and "greater regularity in the performance of the work attained" by the establishment of a Government Printing Office. This was the Committee's opinion only and no recommendation on those lines was made, the Committee confining itself to reporting that it could not suggest any alteration which could at that time be made "in the mode of conducting the printing of the House, especially as the performance of the work is dependant upon private printing offices".

The "Expediency of establishing a Government Printing Establishment" was again investigated in 1858. The Library and Printing Committee of the House could find little fault with the existing arrangements: the work was performed by the contractors "in a satisfactory manner and generally speaking with tolerable punctuality and despatch". The average cost of Government printing for the last three years had been about £1,600, which seemed reasonable enough; but the reason for an increase of about 100 per cent in the contract rates between 1856 and 1858 had not been explained satisfactorily to the Committee.<sup>1</sup> It felt that the "present prices" were too high. Should it be found impracticable to get the Government printing done by contract "upon fair and reasonable terms", the discontinuance of the contract system would become necessary, the Committee considered.

The Committee heard a good deal of conflicting evidence as to the cost of establishing and maintaining a Government Printing Office and decided that, under the existing circumstances, which included the difficulty of obtaining extra hands during the session,

<sup>1</sup>The variations in the actual cost of Government printing at this period are interesting. In 1855 the cost was £1,421; 1856, £2,467; 1857, £1,030; 1858, £1,907; 1859, £3,884; 1860, £1,666; 1861, £3,500. These figures have been "rounded" to the nearest pound.

it was not expedient "to proceed to the organisation of such an establishment". The answer, its members felt, was to stimulate competition among the tendering firms by arranging longer contracts (two years instead of the existing six months) so that smaller firms might be encouraged to tender. Prices might then be reduced.

A problem which faced the printing contractors was the amount of type kept standing during the passage of legislation through the House. Mr W. C. Wilson, the contractor for Government printing, gave evidence that he then had upwards of 300 pages standing – 2 tons of metal locked up – which could not be distributed. It was important that the Printing Office should have sufficient type to be able "to keep Bills and Acts introduced into the Legislature standing from their first stage until finally assented to".

Three years later the question was again examined. In February 1861 seven officers of the General Government formed a board "for the purpose of inquiring into, and reporting upon, the advisability of establishing in this Colony a Government Printing Press". Their report was presented in May 1862. The Board considered it "very advisable" that a Government printing press should be established, "not only as a matter of economy, but as a matter of convenience in expediting the daily work of the General Assembly during Session, and the general ordinary work of the Government".

With exemplary thoroughness, the Board compared the cost of Government printing in New Zealand under the contract system with that of Tasmania and South Australia, where the work was done by Government printing offices. For an original outlay of £2,000, plus an annual expenditure of £2,200, "exclusive of stationery", the Government "could be provided with the means of efficiently carrying on the whole of their printing," the Board considered. With the Government's own printing establishment the proceedings of the House could be printed daily "and be in members' hands generally on the morrow". The Government Printer (recommended salary £350) would be responsible for the accuracy of the work; his clerk/reader/storekeeper (salary £200) would relieve the staff of the House from some of the burden of checking and correcting proofs;<sup>1</sup> and during the recess the Printing Office staff could print the annual volumes of statistics, census forms, and other Government forms. Old ordinances and Acts out of print could be republished during the recess and the Government Printer could take over responsibility for the circulation of all the colony's publications.

<sup>1</sup>"... nor would the clerks be called on to read the same work three times".

"In conclusion," the Board of Officers reported, reversing the opinion of the earlier Committee of 1858, "we considered the objection as to the difficulty of obtaining the requisite hands, but after deliberating upon it, we do not find sufficient grounds to consider it tenable."<sup>1</sup>

A Select Committee was appointed by the House to examine this report. It heard further evidence and reported on 30 August 1862 its agreement in principle with the report. This Committee's recommendation, although not adopted by the Government until nearly a year later, and then only after further prodding, marks the real beginning of the establishment of the Government Printing Office. Perhaps that is sufficient excuse to quote its report in full:

"By the establishment of a Government Press two objects have been stated as likely to be gained. First a reduction of expense in the General printing of the Government during the year: Secondly an increase of expedition and accuracy in the execution of the Sessional printing.

"Your Committee are of opinion that an establishment fit in every respect to perform all the work required for the various departments of the Government in a satisfactory and creditable way, must be large, well stocked with Type, supplied with a variety of fittings and provided with valuable and bulky machinery.

"Though your Committee recognise to its full extent the probable value to the Colony of such an establishment, they cannot overlook the fact, that its removal from place to place, on a change of the Seat of the Government would be attended with serious inconvenience and great loss.

"For the purpose of facilitating the printing which the General Assembly requires to be performed with both speed and accuracy during its Session, your Committee believe that a moderate establishment such as that proposed in the report of the board of Officers, referred to your Committee, would be found of considerable service and might be transferred from one building to another or from one Town to another without any great expense or risk: While out of Session it would be well occupied without superseding all contract printing."

<sup>1</sup>In one aspect of its recommendations the Board was singularly short sighted. "The space required [for the Printing Office] would consist of two rooms, a compositors' room and a press room," its recommendation ran; "neither of these need exceed 22 ft. by 12 ft. (Of course this would not comprise storage room.)" The years that have followed have emphasised many times the error of this judgment.



The chairman of this Printing Press Committee was the Hon. Crosbie Ward, the Postmaster-General. In November 1862 he was sent to England to make arrangements for a fast mail service between New Zealand and Great Britain via Panama.<sup>1</sup> In July 1863 he was instructed to carry out the recommendations of his Select Committee and endeavour to obtain printing materials and a printer during his visit. The materials were bought from the well known London firm of typefounders, Messrs V. and J. Figgins,<sup>2</sup> but Ward's search for "a thoroughly competent manager" for the Printing Office had met with no success before he returned to New Zealand in March 1864. Figgins were asked to continue the inquiry.

### *Finding a Government Printer*

In New Zealand there was no shortage of applicants for the job of Government Printer. The reports of the Select Committees had given a broad hint of the Government's intention to establish its own press: Government secrets were not always easy to keep when the Government's printing was done by private contract. The inquiries made earlier in Australia attracted applicants from across the Tasman, the first as early as May 1862; but of the nine who applied for the position the two main contenders were men already engaged in the work – Joseph Wilson and George Didsbury.

Joseph L. Wilson was born in Hobart, Tasmania, in 1837 and came to New Zealand in 1841. He was a son of W. C. Wilson, the main contractor for Government printing for nearly 16 years and first choice for the position.<sup>3</sup> Joseph Wilson learnt his trade in the *New Zealander* office under his father's guidance, and of recent years had been responsible for the management of the Government's work in this office. His father, whose word would no doubt carry considerable weight, considered him "fully competent" to hold the position.

George Didsbury was equally well qualified. He, too, had worked on the *New Zealander* under W. C. Wilson for over 11 years, for most of that time on Government work. In May 1864 he was overseer in the jobbing department of Messrs Creighton and

<sup>1</sup>This route cut some 2,500 miles off the usual journey around Africa.

<sup>2</sup>The total cost quoted by Ward in a letter dated 19 October 1863 was £769 14s. 10d. delivered on board ship. George Didsbury, in his first annual report on 26 September 1868, says: "The cost of the original plant was £844."

<sup>3</sup>See p. 28.



Scales, where he was responsible for the supervision of all Government printing. A reference from W. C. Wilson describes him as a "steady, sober, industrious young man" with a thorough knowledge of Government work.

On 12 May 1864 Joseph Wilson was appointed Government Printer. His salary was £300 a year, and his appointment was conditional, for the first six months, on the possibility that he would be superseded should a manager arrive from England to fill the position ("an improbable but possible contingency").<sup>1</sup> Wilson was instructed to inspect the plant due to arrive in the *Statesman* and to get the premises fitted up. Didsbury was appointed overseer.

Fifty-one packages of material arrived from England in June. Two presses, a double demy and a super-royal, and 7,500 lb of type formed the bulk of the order. Wilson found the material in good condition but on an exceedingly limited scale; there was not sufficient to do more than half the printing required by the Government, he reported. He recommended that a printing machine should be obtained ("as much work can be done with a good one as by half-a-dozen presses") and that a man should be sent from England to manage it. The large number of *Gazettes* required made a printing machine "almost indispensable" he said. He appended a statement of the goods received and a list of the material required, an additional cost of about £1,180, "to put the office in a position to do all the printing in a satisfactory and economical manner". Among these requirements was a supply of the diphthong "ae", required in particular for the words "Victoriae Reginae" which occurred frequently in official notices.

#### *Government Printing Office Established*

Orders were sent to Sydney and to England for this additional material, and in July the Printing Office was set up in two rooms and the basement of the Lyceum Building in Alten Road, Auckland. The basement, used as a pressroom, had no floor, and a number of the windows were broken. The Government took possession from 1 July at a rent of £115 per annum, paid quarterly; but within a few weeks additional rooms were taken over at a rent of £1 a week. The staff comprised Joseph Wilson, George Didsbury

<sup>1</sup>The New Zealand Government's Agent in London, John Morrison, was instructed on 6 April 1864 to countermand Crosbie Ward's direction to Figgins to find a manager.

(his overseer), five compositors, two boys, and a messenger for general duties.<sup>1</sup> One of the "comps" acted as pressman while an endeavour was made to find a pressman in Sydney.

The compositors' wages were £150 a year, much lower than that paid by private printers in Auckland. The men were first-class hands, "sober and industrious" in Wilson's words; "but I fear I shall have to fall back on inferior workmen unless a slight addition is made to their salaries," he wrote to the Attorney-General on 27 October. He sought authority, immediately granted, for a slight increase. The men had to work overtime when required, a frequent occurrence during the session of the General Assembly. Already, by the end of October, another boy had been added to the establishment "at £3 10s. per month", and when the session began in November two more men were engaged. At this date the plant comprised three Albion presses, double demy, royal, and demy, and a galley press.

For some time the removal of the seat of Government from Auckland to Wellington had been contemplated, and when Frederick Weld became Prime Minister in November 1864 this step was taken. Wilson at once let it be known that should the Printing Office be removed to Wellington he would resign. The year before, his father and elder brother, William, had established the *New Zealand Herald*; Joseph Wilson subsequently joined them.<sup>2</sup> At first it was intended that the Printing Office should remain in Auckland until the printing for the session had been completed; but in February Wilson was instructed that the removal of his establishment was not to be delayed "on any account" beyond the first steamer coming south in March.

Wilson found it impossible to meet this deadline and received a stern reprimand from the Government for neglecting to comply

<sup>1</sup>According to an account by Frank Rogers, one of the boys on Wilson's staff, the compositors were James Burns, William Payne, J. P. Leary, —Bryce, and Thomas Kirkbride, the last acting as pressman. Henry Deeks, a former blacksmith and soldier, was the messenger and general assistant. The boys were John Joseph Robinson and John Francis Rogers. "If there were others at the start," says Rogers, "I have forgotten them." A nominal roll of civil servants published in the *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives* for 1866 (D. 3) throws some doubt on Rogers's list of compositors. Burns, Leary, and Payne were certainly "originals"; but J. J. Cherrett also joined the staff as pressman on 1 July 1864, and F. Long and John McGlashan as "comps" on 1 October 1864. Kirkbride himself, in a letter on 22 March 1865 to the Colonial Secretary applying for the position of overseer, says that he was "induced to . . . attach myself to the Government printing staff a short time before their removal [from Auckland]", a statement which indicates that he was not a member of the original staff.

<sup>2</sup>After their father's death the Wilson brothers formed, in partnership with A. G. Horton, the firm of Wilson and Horton, proprietors to this date of the *New Zealand Herald* and the *Auckland Weekly News*.

with its instructions. These remarks were later withdrawn and Wilson's explanation accepted; but his letter of explanation, dated 4 March 1865, also contained his resignation: "... it is extremely inconvenient for me to leave the Auckland Province at present." He recommended to the Government as his successor George Didsbury, whom he considered eminently qualified for the office: "... he has had long and intimate connection with Government printing in this Colony. . . . He has taken a great interest in the office and has rendered me very efficient aid in performing the printing with neatness and despatch."

Joseph Wilson's services as Government Printer terminated at the end of March with a letter of thanks from the Government for the efficient manner in which he had performed those duties. Didsbury, then aged 26, was appointed his successor from 1 April, and James Costall became overseer. News of the coming changes in the Printing Office staff encouraged many applicants to seek appointment. On one of these applications the Prime Minister minuted: "There are no end of applications for employ<sup>t</sup> as printers from small boys up to managers - What vacancies are there?" The position of overseer, in particular, was much sought after.

The man appointed, James Costall, was formerly employed on the staff of the Wellington *Independent* "as a sort of Overseer and Manager". A testimonial describes him as "a remarkably steady and industrious man". He had already served 18 years in the trade at the time he was appointed and had had previous experience of Government work during the period when the provincial government of New Munster published its separate *Gazette*. Small, active, energetic, he was the eldest of three brothers apprenticed to the printing trade, all to the same employer in Boston, Lincolnshire, before coming to New Zealand in 1855. He remained with Didsbury as his second in command until he retired in 1892.



## THE MOVE TO WELLINGTON

IN the meantime the Printing Office in the dilapidated Lyceum Building was packed up and loaded on board the *Ladybird* at Auckland. Didsbury and his staff sailed with the machinery, which by this time had been augmented by the addition of the press and type used by John Gorst at Te Awamutu to print his *Te Pihoihoi Mokemoke* ("the sparrow on the housetop"). The *Ladybird* arrived at Wellington on 18 March 1865, and the Printing Office moved into two rooms in a wooden building on Lambton Quay, "a very small and inconvenient place",<sup>1</sup> on the site later occupied by the Hotel Cecil, soon to be demolished. The building was then on the seafront, almost opposite Munn's wharf.<sup>2</sup> On its southern side was the old Courthouse.

Didsbury's photographs show kindly eyes in an intelligent face, framed by the straggling moustache and muttonchop whiskers of the period. But his character emerges most clearly in his annual reports. For 28 years, until his death in April 1893, he was Government Printer. His reports record good years and bad; the strains that beset the head of a growing organisation so closely linked to the Government of a growing colony; the achievements and the disasters. Didsbury's secret, perhaps, was his readiness to share the credit for these achievements with his staff.

"I cannot conclude this Report," he wrote in his first annual report on 26 September 1868, "without noticing the Workmen employed in the Department, and testifying my appreciation of the steadiness, diligence and aptness displayed by them in the performance of their work. The excellence exhibited in the work issued from the office is in no small degree owing to their skill and efficiency. I desire also to bear testimony to the zeal and ability

<sup>1</sup>The Printing Office occupied part of Barrett's old hotel. The phrase quoted is from the Wellington volume (Vol. I) of *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand* (1897), which includes a brief biography of George Didsbury on p. 768.

<sup>2</sup>See photograph on p. 67. Warships landed their men at this wharf, and it was also used by some of the printers. A brief account of the early history of the Printing Office by Frank Rogers says:

"When the Panama Mail Co. started, they put up a davit and kept a large white boat, 30 feet long, beautifully built and finished, for the use of the Company. On the breaking-up of the Panama Company some of the printers bought the boat very cheaply and kept it for some years. It proved a great source of pleasure to the Office."



manifested by the Overseers in the performance of their onerous and responsible duties; and likewise to the Readers, upon the proper performance of whose duties the character of the work so much depends."

The Government Printer's duties in 1865 covered a wide range. Apart from his responsibility for the general management of the Printing Office, he was saddled with a number of minor clerical and accounting tasks that consumed a great deal of his time. He received orders and prepared estimates, gave instructions to the overseer about the work in hand, and, last of all, had the final responsibility for examining and checking all printing accounts. In the minor clerical field were his tasks of preparing salary abstracts and requisitions for stationery, supervising the addressing and posting of *Gazettes*, and entering and valuing all work done "in a book kept for that purpose". His salary for these multiple tasks was £300 a year.<sup>1</sup>

The only other member of the permanent staff was the overseer, whose salary was £200 a year. He was in charge of the composing and pressrooms and was responsible for the execution of the work and for its delivery when completed.

These details are given in the report of a Royal Commission on the Civil Service dated 25 August 1866. The staff of the Printing Office, excluding the Government Printer and the overseer, then numbered 19;<sup>2</sup> their hours of work from Monday to Friday were 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, with one hour allowed for lunch at midday. On Saturdays they worked from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., without a break for lunch.<sup>3</sup> Overtime frequently extended as late as midnight, especially during the parliamentary session.

The Commission made a number of recommendations to reduce expenses. "Free lists" for parliamentary publications, particularly the *Gazette*, were thought to be excessive; the system of selling publications through local agents, who were supplied on credit,

<sup>1</sup>Later he received commission, £50 to £60 a year, on the sale of *Gazettes*, Acts, etc.

<sup>2</sup>They were: compositors—James Burns, J. P. Leary, William Payne, F. Long, John McGlashan, John Gamble, A. Lang, and S. Clapham; compositor and reader—W. Kelleway; pressmen—J. J. Cherrett, H. Hume, and Robert Morrison; press assistants—H. Deeks and H. Blundell; apprentices—F. Rogers, John Waitt, and Edward Waitt; errand boys—Joseph Waitt and E. Milstead. —Return of Officers in the Employ of the Government in *Appendix to Journals, House of Representatives*, 1866, D. 3.

<sup>3</sup>The Commission considered that "the ordinary hours of the trade [eight hours a day] should be required" and that a half-holiday should be allowed on Saturdays. Didsbury, required to submit a report on why these hours were not kept in the Printing Office, pointed out that his men's wages of £3 a week were 10s. lower than those paid in most other centres. "I am strongly of opinion that it would not be a fair proceeding to increase the hours of labour without at the same time increasing their salaries in proportion," he concluded. —Report dated 30 October 1866, National Archives.

was not considered satisfactory, the Commission preferring a system of cash sales direct from the Government Printer. The appointment of a storekeeper to handle these sales and to relieve Didsbury of some of his clerical tasks was recommended. One of the storekeeper's duties would be to issue stationery and forms to Government Departments from stocks held by the Printing Office.

### *Printing Machine Installed*

A shortage of overseas funds in London delayed for more than a year the purchase of the printing machine and type ordered through the New Zealand Government Agent, John Morrison, in July 1864. In the days of handsetting a shortage of type was a major inconvenience. Only a few pages could be printed at a time and it was necessary to return the type to the cases before further pages could be made up, proofed, corrected, and made ready for printing.<sup>1</sup> In May 1865 Didsbury reported that "great inconvenience and loss of time is occasioned in the performance of the work at this office, by the delay in the arrival of the type ordered from England". He suggested that a supplementary order of the "sorts"<sup>2</sup> most urgently required be obtained from Sydney, and this was subsequently done.

The Belle Sauvage printing machine ordered from England arrived by the *Black Swan* about April 1866. With it were detailed instructions from the manufacturers. They began: "Take Side Frame marked 1, bring up No. 1 end frame, bolt together. . . .", and ended "You will now find the machine complete except a few little moveable fittings for the paper guides &c." But things were not as straightforward as they seemed.

The machine and type arrived in 76 packages but without a steam engine to work it. It had been assumed when the order was placed that a steam-printing machine would include a steam engine "as part of its appurtenances". The Prime Minister, E. W. Stafford, recorded his displeasure. "I don't know when a greater blunder has been committed than would seem to be the case in this instance," he wrote on 12 May. "At great expense a machine is got out from Engld, rooms built for it, a 'machinist' engaged and sent out also, and then the 'steam machine' can't be worked for want of the steam motive power!! Let Tenders for an Engine be called for."

The machinist to operate *la belle sauvage* arrived in Wellington early in July 1866. Apparently few qualified tradesmen wanted to

<sup>1</sup>It took almost one-third as long to distribute the type as it took to set it.

<sup>2</sup>The characters or letters in a fount of type.

come to the colony at a time when there was plenty of work for them in England, and those who were willing to migrate wanted full wages for the voyage. Charles Young, appointed in March 1866, had had only a week's experience with the Belle Sauvage in Harrild and Sons' factory before he sailed, but the manufacturers considered him qualified to operate it. Articles of agreement were drawn up in London on 2 March 1866 by which the said Charles Young engaged himself in the service of the said Government of New Zealand "for two years from the day of reporting his arrival at Wellington to the Hon<sup>ble</sup> the Colonial Secretary". Young undertook to "faithfully and diligently employ himself in the service of the said Government as Printer or Worker of Printing Machine or Machines at such place or places as the officer appointed by the said Government for the time being shall require". His salary for "the due and faithful and exclusive services to be rendered by him" was £3 a week. Should he neglect or refuse to perform his duties "or in any way misconduct himself, or infringe, or refuse to abide by the rules and regulations prescribed by the said Government", he was liable to dismissal, the payment of a penalty under bond of £50, and to the loss of any wages due to him.<sup>1</sup>

Charles Young, a man of "sober, steady and persevering habits", began his duties with the Printing Office on 4 July 1866 and remained in the Government's service as overseer in the machine room until March 1899, when he retired. His two-year engagement lasted 32½ years; in that time his salary increased by £74. A certificate from the Government Printer testifies to the fidelity and diligence with which he discharged his duties.

Under Young's care the Belle Sauvage was capable of producing 1,100 impressions an hour. At first it was worked by hand, at well below its maximum capacity; but with the arrival of a 6 h.p. high-pressure steam engine the work began to flow from the Government press. The steam boiler had a tested pressure of 150 lb to the square inch.

### *On Strike*

Wages for "comps" in Wellington in 1865 were roughly £3 a week. Men on "piecework" on the newspapers earned more – up to £5 a week – but they worked as much as 60 hours. A proposal to introduce piecework to the Printing Office for the printing of *Hansard* led to a strike in 1866. The compositors were offered

<sup>1</sup>The Government paid his passage to New Zealand (steerage) and pocket money of £1 a week for the voyage.



1s. 2d. for 1,000 ens; the Chapel asked for 1s. 6d. About 30 men went on strike; and although the Printing Office "comps" were not then members of the Wellington Typographical Union they received the union's support.

To replace the men on strike the Government Printer tried to find compositors from other centres. The strikers took their own steps to counteract this recruiting. One of the union's officials, Charles Monaghan, was deputed by the Chapel to send a telegram to the West Coast asking compositors not to accept employment at the Government Printing Office.<sup>1</sup> At the telegraph office the clerk who accepted the telegram consulted some higher officials and then told Monaghan that the message could not be sent. Monaghan returned to the National Hotel, apparently the meeting place for Wellington printers in those days, and arranged with a German (Mr Baucke) to send the message in German to a German hotelkeeper in Westport, where it was translated into English and circulated among the compositors on the Coast.

Eventually the men accepted 1s. 3d. per thousand, and a more satisfactory arrangement with respect to "circle" marks.<sup>2</sup> With the exception of three men, one of them the Father of the Chapel, Mr J. Jameson, all the strikers were reinstated in the Printing Office. Jameson secured a position on the *Independent* – on piecework!

Even in those days the cost of living in Wellington was higher than in the other main centres. Houses were difficult to find in the new capital, and within 18 months of the Government's move to Wellington house rents increased by from 50 to 100 per cent. The journeymen printers on the staff of the Printing Office found their salary of £3 a week inadequate, and a "memorial" was addressed to the Colonial Secretary requesting an "advancement on their present pay".<sup>3</sup> Without overtime, the memorialists claimed, they could not have kept themselves out of debt; "but they respectfully submit that their ordinary pay should be equal to all their ordinary reasonable expenditure".

"For the character and past conduct of your memorialists while under his superintendence, they beg respectfully to refer you to

<sup>1</sup>According to the Wellington Typographical Union's jubilee souvenir booklet, 1862-1912, some West Coast "comps" were earning (in 1865) as much as £10 or £12 a week. It seems hardly likely that many would be attracted by the Printing Office rates.

<sup>2</sup>Author's corrections and other additions to the original copy – as distinct from type corrections – were often circled and charged for separately.

<sup>3</sup>In Christchurch and Dunedin printers were paid £3 10s. a week.

Mr Didsbury, the Government Printer, and will only further add that should you feel warranted in complying with this request for an advance, it will be their endeavour, by steady and honest attention to their work, to prove themselves neither ungrateful for nor unworthy of it," the letter concluded.

In spite of this peroration, the printers' letter did not reach the Colonial Secretary. The Government Printer first stalled for time (he would bring it up in two months); approached again, he expressed the opinion that no good would result from its transmission. He reminded the petitioners that "the number of working hours [in the Printing Office] is less by one hour per day than in other offices". The petition was subsequently withdrawn.

### *Early Expansion*

The work of the Printing Office increased rapidly. New plant was bought from England and Australia to cope with the flood of Government Bills and Acts and orders and reports that came pouring in. A new wing was added to the building on Lambton Quay, the first of many makeshift additions that have marked the long career of the Government Printing and Stationery Department. By September 1868 a staff of 30, exclusive of the Government Printer, was permanently employed. There were two overseers, one reader, 12 "comps", three pressmen, one machinist, one engineer, three apprentices, and seven boys. Fifteen extra compositors were employed during the session, the number varying according to the amount of work on hand, and an extra reader was engaged for the *Hansard* work. Two more compositors were added to the permanent staff during the year.

"Next in importance to a sufficiency of type," George Didsbury wrote in his first annual report in September 1868, "is the necessity of providing proper Office accommodation. During the recess, the present building is found sufficiently large for the ordinary work of the Department; but when the Assembly is in Session, and the necessity arises for the employment of a large staff of extra hands, very great inconvenience is felt – an inconvenience which has materially increased since the Department undertook the work of printing the Parliamentary Debates. Should the work continue to increase in the same ratio as in the past two years, the demand for additional space will become an absolute necessity."

With his usual clarity of thought, Didsbury introduced his first report with a statement of its object: "... to afford the fullest information as to the results of our labours for the past financial year, and to point out what I consider still wanting to render the establishment prepared for the rapidly increasing demands made upon it during each succeeding Session of the Assembly."<sup>1</sup>

A list of the works published by the Government Printing Office is included in this report. These included the year's Statutes (1867), the *Journals* of the House of Representatives and of the Legislative Council, the *Appendix to the Journals* of the House of Representatives and the index to these Appendices from 1860 to 1866; the *Parliamentary Debates* and the *New Zealand Government Gazette*; *Kabiti* (the Maori Gazette); regulations, statistics, standing orders on Private Bills, a catalogue of the General Assembly Library; a *Handy Book for Coroners*, geological reports, laws for steam vessels, harbour and quarantine regulations, regulations for the armed constabulary. The list was to grow considerably in the next 100 years.

Did anyone buy these papers? The Government Printer's total receipts for the year 1867-68 were £491, of which £133 came from advertisements in and subscriptions to the *Gazette* - this was "almost self-supporting". The sale of *Parliamentary Debates* had not been as great as was anticipated; the sale of parliamentary papers "has hitherto been almost *nil*", Didsbury reported. He thought that the liberal free issue of the *Debates* interfered with sales.<sup>2</sup> As for the parliamentary papers, he proposed in future to sell them as separate papers, according to their subjects, and not in bound volumes as formerly.<sup>3</sup>

In 1868, for the first time in its short but busy life, the Printing Office was able to print all the Bills brought before Parliament in the previous session: previously, because of shortage of type, some of this work had had to be farmed out to private printers. All the forms used by the colony's Government Departments - already there were 623 forms of various types, some of them (including census forms), intricate and tabular - were now printed by the Printing Office. Each year new legislation brought new forms; and each year Departments grew larger and their demands on the printer heavier.

<sup>1</sup>Annual reports are usually repetitious: the first sets the pattern for those that follow. For that reason, and to establish a base from which the growth of the Government Printing Office during the next century can be measured, Mr Didsbury's first report is discussed in some detail.

<sup>2</sup>In 1870, of 1,000 copies of *Hansard* published in weekly parts, about 700 were issued free of charge.

<sup>3</sup>The binding was done outside the Printing Office by Mr Robert Burrett, whose establishment stood at the corner of Charlotte Street and Lambton Quay, close to the Printing Office.



The number of "copies" printed during the year ending on 30 June 1868 reached the surprising figure of 4,264,325; the number of pages set up was 15,520; and the value of the work done by the Printing Office for the same period was £11,456.<sup>1</sup>

By 1868 another double-crown Belle Sauvage machine had been installed. It was brought from Melbourne some time the year before to speed the printing of Acts of Parliament after they had received royal assent. Of 95 Acts passed in the 1867 session of the House, 92 received royal assent only on the last day of the session (10 October); many of these Acts were thus in force before the Statutes could be printed, and naturally the Government Printer, quite wrongly, was sometimes blamed for the delay. With two Belle Sauvage machines, each printing at 1,100 impressions an hour, and five hand presses producing about 1,300 impressions each hour, no fewer than 3,500 impressions could be produced hourly if all machines were working at full capacity.<sup>2</sup> Compared with today's figures these totals are minute, but in 1868 they were a cause for pride.

A problem which has always beset the Printing Office is the amount of type kept standing. Bills, in particular, must be kept in their "formes" until they are finally passed; often they remain standing throughout the entire session, occupying space, monopolising the fount, tying down equipment required for other jobs. Didsbury devotes considerable space to this problem in his first report.

"The necessity for having so much of the same kind of type will be apparent from the fact that at the present time I have about ninety-six Bills in type, some of which are of considerable length, and number in all close upon five hundred pages," he wrote. "It is generally necessary to keep the 'formes' of all the Bills standing during the entire Session of Parliament, while it is always necessary to keep them standing until finally disposed of by the Legislature." During their passage through Parliament Bills were often subject to numerous amendments, alterations, and corrections; "and those changes have often to be made in the greatest haste, when the

<sup>1</sup>The term "copies" needs to be defined: it could vary from a document of one page to a large parliamentary paper of 30-40 pages. Both were called one copy. The value of work done (£11,456) was not the *exact* value or actual cost of the work performed. It was based on a uniform charge of so much per page. Similarly, departmental forms were charged for according to size, not according to their content or to the amount of setting required. A very large proportion ("considerably more than one-third") of the printing done by the Printing Office was tabular work, intricate and costly.

<sup>2</sup>"It was fine athletic exercise running a handpress for hours at a stretch, and there were no fat pressmen", an unnamed contributor later wrote. - P & S file 2/196, History of Government Printing Office.

Houses are sitting, or in time for the sitting next day," Didsbury continued. "If the pages are not in type, and in 'chase' also, when those corrections are required to be made, the course of legislation on the measure would be impeded. . . . If a whole Bill had to be 'set up' every time the measure was discussed in either branch of the Legislature, the expense of printing Bills during the Session would be somewhat startling."

### *Hansard*

The printing of the *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates* (*Hansard*) became the Government Printer's responsibility in 1867.<sup>1</sup> A problem which immediately arose concerned the extent to which members could correct their own speeches on the galley proofs: could they "polish" them, improve the diction, make additions, or were their corrections to be limited to the correction of "literals" and the occasional improvement of syntax? In 1867 resolutions passed by the Select Committee on Reporting Debates allowed members "the opportunity of revising the reports on the strict understanding that the alterations are to be confined to making the reports more in accordance with the remarks actually uttered in the House". The Chief Reporter of *Hansard* was to be the judge of these alterations: any difference of opinion between the member and the Chief Reporter was to be referred to the Committee.

Notwithstanding these resolutions, some members felt that they were justified in improving the wording of their speeches where necessary. So extensive were their corrections at times that, according to the Government Printer, "the amount of time absorbed in making members' corrections is fully equal to the cost of setting up the copy afresh". No fewer than 2,719 hours were spent in making corrections to the 1868 *Hansard* – a cost of £227.

Naturally complaints were made, and in 1869 the Reporting Debates Committee was instructed to examine them. One side of the case was presented by the Chief Reporter. He felt that there was "considerable room for improvement" in the production of *Hansard*; the work got into arrears mainly because the compositors ceased work each night at 11 o'clock while the reporters remained on the job until their work was done, he said; members received

<sup>1</sup>The reports of the debates from 1854 to 1866 were reprinted from newspaper reports. They appeared in five volumes, published between 1884 and 1886, printed and bound in the same style as the later volumes. These volumes were edited by Mr Maurice FitzGerald. Some of the newspaper reports occupied 12 to 14 columns of one issue, printed in 6 point, or nonpareil as it was then known.

their proofs so long after they had made their speeches that they could not remember accurately all they had said; in the past there had been some "bad reporting", but "bad composing" should take an equal share of the blame. He suggested that costs would be reduced if compositors were paid "by the piece and not by time as at present, when no distinction can be made between the good and bad workman".

Didsbury produced figures to refute the piecework argument and emphasised the undesirability of employing side by side men whose wages were calculated on different scales. "To go to the root of the matter at once," he wrote on 9 June 1869 with his customary directness: "relieve me of the work of correcting – in some cases, I may say, resetting – honorable Members' speeches, and the great cause of delay in publishing the debates would at once be removed. This has proved our greatest stumbling-block; and as long as honorable Members are allowed unlimited license in the correction of their speeches – unchecked by editorial supervision, as was the case last Session – so long will difficulty and delay attend the publication of *Hansard*." He felt that the Chief Reporter should be allowed "to refuse all corrections which bear the character of embellishments, and admit those only which are necessary for the correct rendering of a sentence". As for the night work recommended by the Chief Reporter, it had been tried before "and in my opinion signally failed". More work was done by the compositors during the day than at night.

The Committee was not convinced, and its report is hardly flattering to the Printing Office, which apparently was not yet accepted as a permanent institution. "Your Committee express no opinion as to the propriety of continuing the Government Printing Office," it reported. "Much might be said for and against its continuance; but your Committee consider that the Government should institute a searching inquiry into the general system of management during the recess, with a view to the reduction of the very heavy annual expenditure under the head of Printing."

The Committee further suggested that the production of *Hansard* should be separated from the rest of the work of the Printing Office. The *Hansard* staff should be separate from the regular staff; they should begin work at eight o'clock each evening and continue until the reports from the shorthand writers had been set up in type and corrected. The composition would go on simultaneously with the reporting, so that the report of one day's debate would be in type and circulated amongst members for correction early next morning. The corrections from members' proofs would then be made during the day, and the type returned to the "comps"



resuming work at 8 p.m. The Committee recommended that these *Hansard* "comps" should be paid piecework rates: it also recommended that a permanent reader for *Hansard* should be appointed.

Most of these changes were subsequently made, although not with the full approval of Mr Didsbury. He refers to them in his 1870 report when discussing the "many inconveniences and drawbacks" attending the production of *Hansard*. He had tried to overcome these by employing a much larger staff of compositors; and as the building was not large enough to accommodate them a night staff was organised and another suboverseer and reader temporarily appointed. "I have, however, found no reason to alter the opinion I previously expressed respecting night-work," he reported. "Not only as regards the health and convenience of the men, but also on the ground of economy, day-work is to be preferred to night-work wherever possible."

The Government Printer also drew attention to the overcrowded conditions existing in the building, especially during the session, and recommended extensive enlargements. The unavoidable use of kerosene lamps, he said, "renders the atmosphere extremely unwholesome and injurious to health. In a room about 30 by 12, fourteen men have at present to work during the whole of the night, with nine kerosene lamps burning at the same time. This overcrowding cannot but to some extent impede the work, and interfere with the order and regularity of the establishment. I would therefore suggest that the composing room occupied by the *Hansard* staff should be enlarged to at least double its present size. . . ."

A new publication produced by the Government Printing Office in 1869 was the first part of a legal work containing reports of the cases determined before the New Zealand Court of Appeal during the years 1867-68. This work, modelled on the English Law Reports, was edited by Mr Justice Johnston, who also saw the publication through the press. During this year also a second edition of Mr Justice Johnston's *New Zealand Justice of the Peace*, a monumental work of 1,244 pages, printed in two parts, was put through the press, the first part being published early in 1870. Changes in legislation had made extensive alterations to the original text necessary.

During this year (in February 1869) the Government Printer was called on to submit monthly returns showing the amount of work performed by the Printing Office, its value, the amount paid in salaries, and the number of hands employed. The compilation of these statistics, and the statistical information prepared for the Reporting Debates Committee's inquiry into the working of the

Printing Office, imposed an additional heavy burden on Didsbury's shoulders.<sup>1</sup> Good use was made of these tables in the year's annual report.

In 1870, for the first time in the history of the colony, the *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives* had to be published in two volumes. Together they contained 1,762 pages, 562 pages more than the previous year's volume.<sup>2</sup> More papers than usual, some of them of considerable length, were presented to Parliament during the previous session; and the extra printing required made additional demands on the staff of the Printing Office and on its plant.

### *Additions to Building, 1873*

These demands were reflected in damage to the machinery through wear and tear and in some dissatisfaction amongst the staff. The plant was far too small to carry out the work required of it, and additions became urgently necessary. More type was bought (over 4 tons of it), and in 1873 a double-royal Wharfedale printing machine and three small treadle machines, varying in size from demy folio to foolscap folio, were purchased. A large steam-operated paper-cutting machine was also obtained. While these were being installed and additions made to the building in Lambton Quay, the whole of the plant and material were temporarily removed to premises in Molesworth Street. This naturally caused some inconvenience and is reflected in the figures for the value of the work done during the year ending 30 June 1873, which at £11,593 showed a decrease of more than £700 over the previous year's figure.

The alterations to the Lambton Quay premises consisted of an additional storey on the old building and some rearrangement of the rooms on the ground floor. This provided additional accommodation in the composing rooms, reading rooms, machine rooms, and pressrooms. But the additions, though welcome, were still not sufficient: ". . . the resources of the Department . . . are in many respects unequal to the strain put upon them during the Session," Didsbury reported. ". . . so long as orders are received

<sup>1</sup>To illustrate the weight of the Government Printer's clerical tasks: "The number of letters received by me during the last year [1868-69] was 694, exclusive of all correspondence with the respective Agents in the Provinces. These letters entail a considerable amount of labour upon the head of the Department, who, unassisted by a clerk, performs the duty of replying and otherwise attending to them."

<sup>2</sup>The two volumes published in 1871 were even larger; in 1872 and 1873 the Appendices filled three volumes for each year.

from so many different sources, occasions will arise when, by the simultaneous receipt of extensive orders, the Printing Office will for a time be choked with work. This would occasionally occur even were the plant and premises double their present size." Notwithstanding the exertions made by his staff to meet these requirements, it was not always possible to comply with those demands "with the rapidity and promptitude expected".

And still the work continued to grow. A reduction in telegraph charges in 1870, for instance, greatly increased the use of telegrams. Who printed the forms? The Government Printer: 1,627,960 as against 714,900 (round figures are sufficient) the previous year. Didsbury's returns in 1872 showed conclusively that during the year the plant produced work to the amount of three times its value: work done, £12,302; estimated value of plant, £3,828.



## Chapter 5

### PARLIAMENTARY INVESTIGATIONS

ON 15 September 1873 the House of Representatives resolved:

“That the Government be requested to lay on the Table of the House, an audited Capital and Profit and Loss Account of the Government Printing Office, covering the last four years ending 30th June, 1873; also to append a Memorandum stating what system of check or control has been adopted in respect of the working and management of the Printing Office.”

This report was duly prepared by the Auditor-General and presented to the House on 8 July 1874. The detailed examination was carried out by the chief clerk of the Audit Office, assisted by Mr Thomas McKenzie of the *Wellington Independent*: their reports fill nine printed foolscap pages. Work procedures and the duties of various key officers are described in detail; some fault is found with accounting procedures; attention is drawn to the danger of fire, to the lack of fire insurance on the premises, and to the fact that there was no hose to attach to the water pipe in the event of a fire; too much of the Government Printer's time is said to be “frittered away” in trifling work. But the tenor of the whole report is favourable, a judgment succinctly expressed in one of McKenzie's concluding paragraphs:

“Altogether, the office appeared to me to be well conducted, the several branches to have all the necessary convenience for performing their work with efficiency and despatch, and the work produced to be excellent.”

The staff at the time of this report numbered 99. To the investigating officers they gave “every appearance of industry”; their wages and hours (40 a week) were considered to be better than in private establishments; the staff “contains some of the best workmen in the colony”.

Antipathy between the workmen of some branches was also revealed. “There is a fancied superiority on the part of the workmen in the photographer's and lithographic departments over their

fellow-workmen in the Printing Department," the Audit Office's chief clerk reported. He could find "no good reason" why the work of the different branches could not be conducted in harmony, although he considered the practice by which the heads of the photographic and lithographic departments received orders other than through the Government Printer was "apt to engender a feeling of independence not conducive to the welfare of the establishment".

The Printing Office was obviously suffering from growing pains. These had become evident two years or so earlier, when some of the staff had expressed their dissatisfaction with their working conditions and rates of pay. The Government Printer had then suggested that some of the "comps" should be placed under bond so that the production of *Hansard* would not be interfered with in the event of further disputes. His proposal was approved by the Colonial Secretary and referred to the Attorney-General; but it seems that the men themselves refused to be put under bond. The Auditor-General's investigators could suggest no effectual remedy to the problem other than to regulate the pay by the demand for labour.

A draft of the proposed contract between compositor and Government Printer, presumably in Didsbury's handwriting, still exists. It is written on the back of a large census form (15 in. by 20 in.) recording the names "of the Members of the Household or Family, Visitors, Servants, or others, who slept or abode in this Dwelling on the night of Thursday, the nineteenth of December, 1867".

The draft agreement is dated 1872. Simplifying the legal phrasing, it said that the compositor was to undertake to work in the Government Printing Office during the next session of the General Assembly, "for such reasonable and usual working hours (either at day work or night work) as the contractor shall appoint", on every day of the week except Sunday. His wages on piecework were to be 1s. 3d. per 1,000 lines for *Parliamentary Debates* and 1s. 2d. for other parliamentary papers; when employed on time rates he would be paid 1s. 6d. an hour for day work and 1s. 8d. for night work; overtime for night hands began at 1 a.m. During this employment the "comp" undertook "at all times [to] obey and execute the lawful and reasonable commands and directions of the contractor . . . and shall not absent himself therefrom without leave and in all respects shall diligently and faithfully serve the contractor". The penalty for any breach of this agreement was dismissal without notice and forfeiture of any wages due; should the "comp" quit or neglect or absent himself from his employment he would be

liable to pay to the contractor "a sum of £10 as and by way of liquidated damages". For his part, the Government Printer could terminate the agreement by giving the compositor a week's notice.

At this distance the contract seems a one-sided document and it is perhaps not surprising that the men would have none of it.

Each year the parliamentary sessions provided employment for a large number of men who, in the bad times of the 1880s, would otherwise have been without work. They came to Wellington from all parts of New Zealand; for the opening of the session in May 1880, Didsbury is reported to have had "considerably over forty" applications for work. When the session ended, two-thirds of the piecemen could expect to be put off. "... it takes an average workman all his time to earn £3 per week on the 'solid dig' of *Hansard*," said the editorial writer of the *Colonial Printers' Register* on 21 July 1880. Parliament's decision earlier in July to reduce all Government salaries and wages by 10 per cent was a severe blow to these casual hands, whose earnings for a week of 56 hours now averaged £2 12s.

The Printing and Stationery vote was also reduced by 10 per cent, and the Government Printer had no alternative but to dismiss staff at the end of the session. Many of these dismissals are recorded in the *Register*: February 1880 - "About the beginning of the present month fourteen hands got the 'go' from the G.P.O."; there were rumours also "that the stab. [establishment] hands are to be put on half time". September 1880 - "Trade remains in a wretched state here; no hopes of improvement . . . On Saturday last, seven hands were discharged from the G.P.O." Single men were usually dispensed with first, a method of selection which provoked controversy from time to time in the *Colonial Printers' Register*.<sup>1</sup>

### *The Lean Eighties*

Further economies were sought, and the Printing Office was again the target for parliamentary investigation. A Committee of three was set up by the House "with the object . . . of ascertaining in what directions a closer economy, compatible with efficiency, could be enforced". The Government Printer's estimates and returns were subjected to "a searching analysis"; accommodation

<sup>1</sup>Temporary hands with less than three months' service (later reduced to two months) were under engagement by the day, "terminable without notice on either side"; all other temporary appointments were subject to one week's notice on either side.



and working conditions were criticised. But these shortcomings had been pointed out by Mr Didsbury many times before, and he could hardly be blamed for the Government's failure to do anything to correct them. Nor could he be blamed for members' extravagance in correcting their *Hansard* proofs or for some of the reporters' indecipherable copy, two matters to which the Committee drew attention as the cause of expense and delay.

Some kind things were said about Didsbury's management:

"It is with great pleasure that we bear witness to the signs of good management to be found throughout the Printing Office under Mr. Didsbury, and the excellent description of work turned out by every branch," the committee reported on 30 July 1880. "This struck us as being all the more creditable when we considered the difficulties under which the work has to be carried on – difficulties which arise as much from the unsuitable character of the buildings into which the department appears to have grown, as from the spasmodic and careless manner in which copy for the printer is often brought into the office from the various departments of Government. A more systematic and economical mode of management could, no doubt, be inaugurated if suitable buildings were provided."

As for the staff: "We do not consider that the men are overpaid." Because of their hours, "working by night and day", printers "must live near to the office" and thus could not avail themselves of "the cheaper house-rents at the outskirts of the town". At the same time, the report continued, "there is no reason why the men should not be called upon to share in the sacrifice so generally demanded from all employés in the Government service at the present time"; the Committee accordingly recommended that hours of work should be increased from 40 to 45 per week, and that overtime rates should be decreased in proportion.

Other economies were recommended. Issue fewer free copies of parliamentary papers; increase the price or reduce the bulk of the quarterly *Postal Guide*; charge justices of the peace £1 a year for the *Gazette*; eliminate all unnecessary printing and channel all orders except parliamentary papers through one officer in the Colonial Secretary's Department. Allow the Government Printer to break up any type kept standing more than three months without final instructions from the ordering Department. Avoid undertaking work "of a clearly unprofitable nature" – the finger was pointed here at a book on Polynesian mythology "just completed by order of the late Government". In the course of time many of these suggestions were adopted.

Some new expenditure was recommended too. A deputation from the staff had waited on the Committee to complain about the overcrowded state of the pieceroom, which the Committee found "utterly unfit" for its purpose. At the same time this deputation had expressed the hope that their wages would not be reduced.<sup>1</sup> The Committee made a second visit to the pieceroom accompanied by the Colonial Architect, whose comments were appended to the report. In spite of the "rather serious" expense, the Committee recommended that an efficient system of ventilation be installed immediately.

The Committee also recommended that the Government Printer should in future submit an annual report showing the operations of his Department. Previously these reports had been made spasmodically, but from 1881, with a few exceptions noted later, they appear regularly each year in the *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives*.

Mr Didsbury began his report for the year 1880 with a description of the building. At that date it consisted of 47 rooms, 27 of them occupied by the Printing Department and 15 by the Stationery Store, which had become the Government Printer's responsibility in January 1879. The improvements to the ventilation of the composing room occupied by the piecehands had been carried out and the room now presented "a wholesome and cheerful appearance". A similar improvement had been made to the stereotypers' room, where previously fumes from the molten metal and gas had made the atmosphere very unwholesome.

Eight machines now occupied the machine rooms and pressrooms. Four were Dawson and Son Wharfedales (one a recent bargain secondhand at £110), one a double-crown Belle Sauvage, two Minerva jobbing machines, and one an envelope-printing machine called the "Little Tumbler". Five hand presses were in use – two being kept for pulling proofs – and two galley presses. A newspaper-addressing machine, made by Hartild and Sons and worked by treadle, was used for the dispatching of parliamentary papers: in type were 4,250 addresses in 135 galleys.

<sup>1</sup>This, apparently, was not the full story. The *Colonial Printers' Register* of 14 August 1880 comments:

"So says the report; but a correspondent informs us that the deputation referred to complained of a *great many grievances* at present endured by the piece-hands, viz. – That a reduction had already been made; that, as a rule, the copy was badly written, and seldom supervised; that exceptional care was required in spacing, divisions, style, &c.; that, during the recess, the different measures were a drawback; that it was a great difficulty to obtain distribution necessary to complete jobs in hand; and a large number of smaller complaints, which, when combined, are a serious inconvenience as compared with the usual run of piecework."

To indicate the work on hand, 18 tons of type was standing in racks in 645 formes in the proofroom and adjoining pressroom. No one will remember these statistics for more than a few minutes, but they do indicate something of the growth of the Printing Office since 1868, when the amount of standing type (500 pages) had caused concern.

The staff now numbered, on a monthly average, 135, with a peak figure of 163 during the session. Their working hours were now 45 a week.<sup>1</sup> Some 16 to 20 men were employed half time when work was slack; this alternative was offered to a number of married men when work fell off and was accepted by them in preference to being discharged. Apprentices, a monthly average of about 40, began work at 8s. a week. They were bound for a term of six years and reached a maximum wage of 25s. Eighteen young women at similar rates of pay worked in the binding rooms upstairs. They were kept apart from the workmen, had their own separate entrance, and were employed in much the same jobs as they are today – folding, sewing, gathering, and collating.

### *Using Local Materials*

In its early years the Printing Office had depended largely for its materials on imports from England and Australia. Coal came from Newcastle, 130 tons of it a year; parchment and neatsfoot oil from England; the wooden blocks for mounting stereo plates were made of imported Sydney cedar; twine, glue, brushes, all were English made. All these articles had to be carefully ordered months in advance.<sup>2</sup> Gradually New Zealand manufactured materials were tested and introduced. Greymouth supplied the coal, Wellington the candles (100 boxes a year were issued by the Stationery Store), Lower Hutt the brushes and brooms, Porirua the glue – half a ton of it a year. A Blenheim manufacturer made an acceptable parchment – £500 worth a year was imported from England – but this source of supply stopped when the factory closed down. New Zealand totara was found to be every bit as good for mounts as imported cedar. Galleys, brass-tipped shooting-sticks, and compositor's nippers were all manufactured on the premises by the engineer.

<sup>1</sup>The rate paid for piecework was also reduced during the year by 1d. per 1,000 ens – to 1s. 1d. for general work and 1s. 2d. for *Hansard*.

<sup>2</sup>An indent sent to England in November 1878 took nearly 15 months to arrive in New Zealand.



At the end of 1880 the printing office at the Lyttelton Jail was placed under the Government Printer's control. Its main job had been to print forms and books for the Railways Department, but it had also done some printing for other departments. Unfortunately some of this work duplicated printing already done in Wellington, and the Government Printer was called in to handle all future orders. The various processes of printing, stereotyping, and book-binding were supervised by a warder, who had succeeded in training some "tolerably efficient" craftsmen. One of these prisoners, a former schoolmaster whose long sentence ensured some continuity of employment, "undoubtedly evinces considerable aptitude for the work he is now engaged in".

Naturally no one stayed longer on this job than he had to, and in the first five years of the Government Printer's supervision no fewer than 53 prisoners (only one of them with any previous knowledge of the trade) were employed in the jail printing office. They were taught some aspect of the trade, became reasonably proficient, then departed. Eighteen men stayed less than six months; one remained for the whole five years. This constant influx of "raw material" added heavily to the duties of the printers' warder, who himself was required to be a jack-of-all-trades with a knowledge of bookbinding, paper-ruling, presswork, and stereotyping in addition to that of compositor and instructor. In spite of these difficulties the Government Printer found the work, "as a rule", very creditable.

### *Improvements*

The gradual improvements of previous years bore fruit in 1881. Didsbury, introducing his annual report, has cause for satisfaction:

"In no previous year have the requirements of the several departments been more promptly met, or so few complaints made of delays in the execution of orders. These, however vexatious, are unavoidable at times, and beyond the power of ordinary prudence and foresight to guard against; but a judicious subdivision of labour, combined with the hearty co-operation of the overseers, and improved machinery and appliances, have enabled the department to deal more promptly with the numerous orders for printing received."

The replacement of steam engines by gas engines was one direct cause of this improvement in efficiency. Two Crossley gas engines (of 3½ and 6 h.p. respectively) were installed during the year.

They were cleaner than steam engines; they could be started at full power whenever they were wanted; and they saved the Printing Office a great deal of time and about £225 a year. There was also less danger from fire. New machines introduced into the binding branch were an embossing press and a Brehmer wire-stitching machine. The former did work once sent out to private establishments; the latter stapled books and pamphlets with such efficiency that two more were ordered.

But in one respect the Printing Office still lagged behind. Its premises were far too small, the layout inconvenient. Over the years the building had been subdivided into many separate rooms as new branches were established and new machinery installed. Some of these rooms, more especially in the centre of the building, were badly lit and badly ventilated; they were difficult to service by machinery and difficult to supervise. Encroachments made on the yard at the rear of the building by various additions left barely sufficient space for a horse and cart to enter it.

Gas provided the illumination for most of these rooms, but did not make them pleasant places to work in. Compositors must have good light, and with a large number of gas lights burning at once the temperature of a room at night could rise by as much as 20 degrees. The gas burnt up the oxygen already shared by too many men. Men leaving their overheated workrooms for the chill night air contracted colds and other complaints, and much time was lost through sickness when staff could ill be spared.

The advent of electric light in the Printing Office on 25 May 1883 was honoured by a visit from the Prime Minister and all the members of his Ministry; a large number of Wellington's leading citizens also graced the occasion and a full description of the apparatus appeared in the *New Zealand Times*. An account of its installation is also given two pages and a special heading in Mr Didsbury's annual report, much of it, unfortunately, a statistical analysis of the running costs of electric light compared with the cost of gas.

The men themselves appreciated the change. The light was better ("the light is steady and free from flicker or pulsation," Didsbury reported), the air cooler and purer. For a total cost of £873 10s., 63 lights, a portable steam engine and a "dynamo-machine" were installed.<sup>1</sup> Part of the building was still lit by gas.

The arrival from England of new type – an acquisition of some importance – passed almost unnoticed under the blaze of electricity.

<sup>1</sup>According to the *Times*, the Government Printing Office was the first Government building in Wellington to be lighted "by means of this new and important invention". The lights were each 16 candle power: "Every lamp burnt with the expected brilliancy," the *Times* recorded.

But there were bigger things to come. Across the road new land was being reclaimed from the sea. Already half an acre had been reserved through the Minister of Lands for a new Printing Office.

### *New Building Planned*

The new site was on a triangle of reclaimed land bordered by Featherston and Bunny Streets and Lambton Quay.<sup>1</sup> Plans for a three-storeyed brick building were prepared by the Public Works Department's architect, Mr C. E. Beatson, special thought being given to the danger from fire. The boiler-room and furnace were sited outside the main building; there were no open fireplaces or interior stairs or lift wells on the plans to provide a chimney for a possible outbreak; steam pipes from the boilers warmed the rooms and electric light was to replace the old batwing gas burners that for years had made the old building across the road so foul and hazardous.

But this is 1883 and the new building is still five years away. These were years of replacement. Some of the old machines had been flogged almost to death and had reached the stage where the money spent on maintaining them was better invested in buying new machinery. The Government Printer found a bargain in Christchurch, where he bought for £450 a four-feeder Wharfedale printing machine imported for the Christchurch *Telegraph* at a landed cost of £850, but never unpacked. The machine, driven by steam, printed a sheet measuring 44 in. by 32 in. and turned out 5,000 an hour. Another shed had to be built to house it. The "four-feeder" was later sold at a profit.

Other acquisitions in 1883 were a Brehmer wire-sewing machine for sewing stationery and account books and an American double-ruling machine, made to order by W. O. Hickok of Pennsylvania. The ruling machine ruled both sides of the paper in one operation and required only a man and a boy to attend it. By 1884, although replacements and additions were still necessary, there was not a single corner available in the building to house any new machinery. Those already installed were far too close together.

The dangers of this overcrowding in the machine room were brought to notice frequently by Mr Didsbury and emphatically supported by a further parliamentary Select Committee which sat in 1885. This Committee of nine was appointed in July to inquire into "the advisableness or otherwise of printing, under contract

<sup>1</sup>The name shown on the site plan in 1883 was Thorndon Quay, but the present name is retained to avoid confusion.



with private offices, any part of the printing required by the Government of the colony". It heard evidence from seven witnesses, master printers, newspaper proprietors, and of course the Government Printer himself. All agreed that for the purpose of executing the printing required by the Government there must be a Government Printing Office. Could any part of this printing be done cheaper by private contract? Five witnesses decisively answered "No". Two newspaper proprietors thought that "some of it might".<sup>1</sup> The Committee agreed with the majority.

There was some praise for the staff: ". . . it was gratifying to find a preponderance of testimony to the fact that the regular workmen of the establishment, technically called 'the stab hands', were a zealous and efficient body of men, against whom no charge of idleness could justly be made". The witnesses also praised the work of the Government Printer and his overseers.

The building was roundly condemned. Its atmosphere was described by various witnesses as "foul", "pestilential", "dangerous to the health of those employed"; it was even said to have been "the cause of death in some cases". Because of the cramped position of the machinery "there is constant danger to life and limb".<sup>2</sup>

The Committee recommended that for comparative purposes, and to test the Government Printer's costs, some portion of the work, at the discretion of the Government Printer, should occasionally be given out to tender. It considered that its investigations had been "sufficiently searching" to render unnecessary the appointment of any further commission of inquiry. For Didsbury and his staff, the result must have been eminently satisfying.

This Committee reported on 18 August 1885. A week later the Legislative Council's Printing Office Inquiry Committee, which had been carrying out its own separate investigation, brought down its report. Its seven members had heard evidence from the Government Printer, three newspaper proprietors, a Wellington stationer, and a Wellington printer. This evidence, the Committee reported, "proves conclusively that a considerable portion of the printing and lithographic work could be done equally as well and cheaper by tender than by the Government Printing Office". The Government Printer could be forgiven if he scratched his head in bewilderment.

<sup>1</sup>They had in mind the printing of forms and other "stock" work which it would pay them to do "at low prices in slack times when their machines were idle". The Committee felt that this work should be done between parliamentary sessions by the Government Printer to enable him to keep men employed during the slack period of the year.

<sup>2</sup>These extracts are from the minutes of evidence, 21 printed foolscap pages.

In this Committee's view, further investigation into the working of the Printing Office and the supply of stationery was required, and it recommended the appointment of a "Commission of experts", to be chosen from various parts of the colony, to examine and report on the working of the Printing Office, "with special reference to the expediency of having some of the work distributed over the colony". Savings in freight costs and other expenses were hoped for by this suggested policy of decentralisation.

No figures are given to support the Committee's recommendations, and the Government apparently took no further action. By now 21 years had passed since the Printing Office was established – for the second time – at Auckland in 1864. It is a paradox of the Government's administration of the Printing Office that in those 21 years it should have spent so much time and so much money trying to decide whether the job could not have been done cheaper by private printers after all.

## Chapter 6

# THE VARIOUS BRANCHES

### *Photolithographic Branch*

THE adoption of the photolithographic process in the colony was first suggested by Dr James Hector, director of New Zealand's first geological survey. At his request inquiries were made in England in 1871 on the use of the process for the reproduction of railway plans, maps, and other drawings. A detailed list of the apparatus required and its cost, plus a description of the various processes, was sent to New Zealand; and in April 1873 Herbert Deveril, a Melbourne photographer, arrived in New Zealand after brief instruction in the Victorian Government's photolithographic department to take charge of the branch. Chemicals and apparatus had been obtained from England and rooms erected to house the branch "on an elevated spot" near the Printing Office.

The branch's first job, in May 1873, was to photograph a series of drawings of fossils for the Geological Department. Most of its early work was done for the Public Works Department in making copies of plans for railways and roads. Three years later it was estimated by this Department that photolithography had saved it the services of 12 to 15 draughtsmen in making copies of contract plans and drawings. Maps which formerly took three or four months to copy could be reproduced photographically in as many hours.<sup>1</sup>

In its first three years of work the branch printed no fewer than 488,193 photolithographs, varying in size from royal octavo to prints measuring 4 ft by 3 ft. These included geological plans and drawings, charts of soundings, native deeds and plans, postal and railway tables, plans attached to patent specifications "and a general assortment of miscellaneous things". The cost of the branch in those days (1876) averaged £605 a year, half of this sum being "fairly chargeable" against the Public Works Department.

<sup>1</sup>"I believe the saving on the whole is understated at £2,000 a year, besides which a great saving of time has been effected. . . ." - John Carruthers, Public Works Department, to his Minister, letter dated 17 July 1876.



Most Government Departments were quick to appreciate and to make use of the branch's services. The Audit Office report of July 1874 praises "the exquisitely beautiful work produced by this branch." Deveril himself, in a report sent by Mr Didsbury to the Minister of Public Works in 1876, lists the advantages of the process in some detail. It afforded the means of producing in numbers "maps, plans and drawings, however elaborate, in a remarkably short space of time," he said; "of reducing those plans to any scale that may be desired; it saves draftsman's labour, by enabling maps and plans to be cut up and mounted for photographing; it affords the means of procuring facsimiles of original documents. . . ." But enough has been said to show the many uses of photolithography in the early years of the Government Printing Office.

### *Lithographic Branch*

The Lithographic Branch was established in 1867 and there was immediately a heavy demand for its services. At first its equipment could not cope with all the work required and assistance was obtained from private firms. Maps produced by the lithographic press were used to illustrate the geological reports published by the Lands and Survey Department. Although working under the Government Printer's supervision, the branch remained under the control of the Lands and Survey Department.

The branch's work was frequently praised. In his annual report for 1870 the Government Printer described its establishment as "a valuable acquisition to the Public Service". It was gratifying to learn, he said, "that competent judges have borne frequent testimony to the general excellence and skill" displayed in the work of the branch.

The list of jobs undertaken by the branch in its early years is impressive. It included the printing of Treasury bills, cheques, autograph circulars, plans, maps, charts, Maori genealogical tables, diagrams illustrating military operations, and other work for botanical, architectural, marine, telegraph, and various scientific papers.

By 1897, according to a report in the Wellington volume of *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand*,<sup>1</sup> the Lithographic Branch was doing work for 14 Government Departments. Mapping work for the Lands and Survey Department included the printing of new maps

<sup>1</sup>Report on Lands and Survey Department, p. 181.

and the correction of old ones, drawings of bridges and culverts, and the printing of sections for road formation work. Guide books, statistical maps, and illustration work kept the staff busy.

On 1 November 1901 the Lithographic Branch of the Lands and Survey Department was transferred to the Government Printer's full control. It had worked under his wing for more than 30 years.

### *Stereotype and Electrotypes Branch*

Lack of accommodation and the difficulty of obtaining the services of a skilled stereotyper delayed the establishment of this branch until 1870. William Kirk<sup>1</sup> came from Melbourne to run the branch, lead moulds were bought in England, and by 1873 all the leads required in the Printing Office were being made on the premises. Electrotypes dies for stamp printing – previously purchased from Australia – were also made by the branch.

Its usefulness was quickly proved. Stamps were supplied for use in the Courts and in the offices of district land registrars: in 1881 no fewer than 229 of these stamps were made for the remarkably low cost of a shilling each. The branch also printed the railway tickets for the whole colony. Three of Waterlow's "inimitable machines" were used – the description is Didsbury's – and in the year 1881 they issued 1,521,135 tickets to supply 470 different stations. Another machine counted the tickets, and a further machine chopped up the used tickets when they were returned. These were then sold to the mills with the waste paper.

The production of rubber stamps also became the branch's responsibility in 1881. Previously these were bought from private manufacturers, at prices varying from 15s. to 25s. each. Made by the stereotype process, the moulds for the stamps were manufactured in the Department and the stamps made at a cost of not more than 1s. 6d. each. Ink pads and turned handles for the stamps were also made by the Printing Office. The requirements of New Zealand's public service were thus supplied at nominal cost.

In 1880 the plates for a new set of duty stamps were made in the Printing Office. The engravings were done by a Wellington engraver, Mr W. R. Bock, and the moulding and electrotyping by Mr Kirk. The set comprised 43 stamps of different denominations, ranging in value from 4d. to £20. Sixty of each kind were electrotyped, making a total of 2,580 stamps.

<sup>1</sup>William James Kirk was born in Liverpool and educated and apprenticed in Melbourne. He came to Wellington on completing his apprenticeship.

A new series of postage and revenue stamps was produced in 1881. Seven electrotyped plates were made, 240 stamps on each, their values ranging from 1d. to 1s. The stamps were designed locally, the engravings made by Mr Bock, and the "electros" produced in the Printing Office. Beer-duty stamps were made in the following year.

One of the main functions of the Stereotype Branch was to take moulds of all statutes and other matter likely to be reprinted. These moulds were taken before the type was broken up; in those days of handset type, the importance of having "stereos" available at immediate notice should not be overlooked. No fewer than 1,202 stereotype plates, 1,090 electrotypes, and 2,186,000 railway tickets were produced in 1884. These figures were later exceeded many times.

### *Stamp Printing Branch*

The Stamp Printing Branch was established in December 1866, when, for the first time, duty stamps were printed by the Government Printer.<sup>1</sup> Previously they had been bought in England. Suitable inks and paper could be procured only from England and the start of the work was fraught with many difficulties, not the least being that of supervision. The stamps were printed on paper chemically prepared and watermarked, and the use of "fugitive" inks made it impossible for them to be tampered with. They were first printed by the copperplate process. The same dies were used for all denominations, from 1d. to £10, the values being impressed on the face of the stamps in type in different coloured inks for each denomination. Originally there were about 60 different values of duty stamps, but the number was considerably reduced when it was found that many of the denominations printed were never used.

The postage-stamp printer on the staff of the Postmaster-General's Department was transferred to the Printing Office in June 1867, and from that date the work of gumming, drying, and perforating all duty and postage stamps was done by the Printing Office. The work of the Stamp Printing Branch, exacting and highly responsible, was carried out in the privacy of a separate apartment at the rear of the Printing Office. There were some early complaints about the lighting of these rooms and their lack of security,<sup>2</sup> but

<sup>1</sup>Didsbury was required to enter into a bond for the safe custody of these stamps, plates, and paper.

<sup>2</sup>See Auditor-General's report of 8 July 1874: "It is scarcely possible to express in too strong terms one's condemnation of the defective arrangements for this important branch of the printing establishment."



these deficiencies were quickly corrected. Electrotypes plates for the postage stamps were obtained from Messrs De La Rue and Co., London, in 1873 to replace the original copper plates, and by this method the rate of production was nearly trebled.

The Stamp Printing Branch did not come under the Government Printer's full control until October 1890. This work had been performed at the Printing Office since 1867, but administrative control of the branch had been retained by the Postmaster-General.<sup>1</sup> The Stamp Printer, Henry Hume,<sup>2</sup> produced some excellent work, "admittedly superior to many of the stamp productions of the sister colonies," Didsbury reported proudly. New machinery replaced the old hand presses, and the output of stamps in 1890 exceeded that of all previous years. The total issues that year reached the spectacular figure of 37,489,000, valued at £816,557 – these are the round figures. A new series of Government insurance stamps and a small issue of Samoan stamps were also produced during this year, as well as new 2½d. and 5d. foreign postage stamps.

### *Stationery Store*

At the request of the Government, the Government Printer took over the management of the Stationery Store on 1 January 1879. The new broom was badly wanted, and in George Didsbury's hands it was given effective use.

Storage premises rented in stables and sheds in different parts of the town were cleared out; redundant copies of parliamentary papers were removed to the cellars of the Government Buildings; unsatisfied requisitions – there were 600 of these on hand – were sorted, supplied, purged. Under the Government Printer's management requisitions were supplied, if possible, on the day after they were received. In 1880 they averaged 27·4 a day, 8,570 for the year, and contained 36,118 items.

Other administrative changes were made which need not be listed here. Requisitions from Departments were carefully scrutinised and some excesses revealed. One office employing four clerks, for instance, in its annual requisition asked for "4 reams blotting paper, 8 reams foolscap, 2 reams note- and 2 reams letter-paper, 250 quill and 240 barrel pens, 4,320 pen nibs, 1,440 paper-fasteners,

<sup>1</sup>The Stamp Printer received his orders from Treasury for postage stamps, and from the Government Printer for duty stamps.

<sup>2</sup>A full-bearded Scot, Henry Hume served his apprenticeship as a pressman in Glasgow and came to New Zealand in 1863. After a brief period in the southern goldfields he entered the Government Printing Office as a pressman in August 1865, was promoted duty stamp printer in 1866, and Stamp Printer in 1890.

6,000 eyelets, 144 Faber's erasers, and 864 elastic bands". Such orders as this were heavily pruned.

The staff at the end of 1880 numbered five officers and one parcel boy. In their charge was a stock of 912 different forms for issuing to Departments, as well as printing and writing papers, official publications, and stationery. Orders sent to England in 1880-81 were to the value of £9,643,<sup>1</sup> and in the same year £881 was spent on the purchase of stationery in New Zealand. The value of overseas orders was gradually reduced by the purchase of local products,<sup>2</sup> and by the substitution of cheaper papers for the expensive hand-made papers formerly used extensively throughout the colony.

Wrapping papers manufactured by mills at Dunedin and Maitaia were used by the Stationery Store in the 1880s, but locally made writing ink was soon proved unsuitable: "The corrosive properties of the ink soon render the pens unserviceable." Departments, naturally, were reluctant to use it. The use of locally made leathers for binding and upholstering was also investigated by the Government Printer about this time, but a great deal of waste was caused through bad butchering.

The work of the Stationery Store expanded rapidly as Government Departments grew in size and number. Orders were dispatched, chiefly by post, to all parts of the colony. Receipts from the sale of official publications increased each year.

Storage problems quickly arose. The first office on Lambton Quay was damp, and stock was damaged when water seeped through from springs in the bank at the rear of the stationery store. Nor was the floor of this store designed to carry the weights it was asked to bear. The introduction of a direct steamer service from England in the 1880s speeded up orders and enabled stocks to be reduced.

### *Binding Branch*

The Binding Branch was established in May 1873. Previously the work had been done by a private contractor, Mr Robert Burrett, but costs were high and delays frequent. To reduce these costs and to speed up the distribution of parliamentary papers, Didsbury set up a small bookbinding branch and equipped it with material and tools obtained from Melbourne, "with what results the balance sheet appended to this Report clearly demonstrates".

<sup>1</sup>Stationery was ordered annually through the Agent-General in London, who called for tenders. The system did not always work satisfactorily.

<sup>2</sup>See p. 54.

By 1880 the bindery had spread to four workrooms, two store-rooms, and a quire room. Two of these rooms were occupied by 18 young women (carefully segregated from the male staff and supervised by a forewoman) who were employed in folding, sewing, gathering, and collating. They had their own private entrance to the building.

Account books, registers, and record books, many of them previously imported from England, were bound in this branch for the various Government Departments. Some of this work was displayed in the New Zealand court at the Sydney Exhibition and earned high praise: "Perhaps the finest collection of colonial book-binding is that of Mr. G. Didsbury, of Wellington," said one report. "... the time cannot be far distant when the skill of the English handicraftsman will be found more than rivalled by the colonial workman."

Many of the routine processes in a bindery are done by machines. A folding machine capable of folding about 2,000 sheets an hour was used to fold *Hansard* and other parliamentary papers. It was driven by steam. A Brehmer wire-sewing machine was another early purchase. Installed early in the 1880s, it was believed to be the first of its kind in the colony. It was used to bind the statutes and for sewing stationery and account books. A new backing machine, a thread book-sewing machine, and two more wire-stitching machines were added to the plant in 1886.

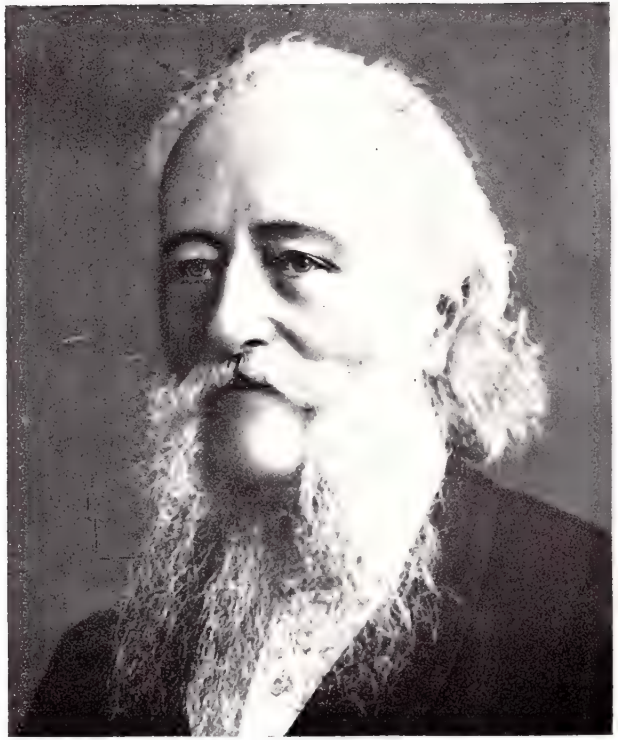
More machines were needed but there was simply no room for them in the old building. The move to the new building across the Quay in September 1888 greatly improved conditions in the Binding Branch – for a time at least. In 1893 the bookbinders were moved from their top-floor quarters to the first floor, exchanging with the "comps" so that the latter could have better light for their work. There was some rearrangement of machinery and shafting to accommodate this move.<sup>1</sup>

William Franklin was overseer of this branch for many years. London-born, he came to New Zealand in 1874 and joined the staff of the Printing Office as a finisher in December 1875. He became overseer in August 1877. Another Londoner, George Broad, was suboverseer. Both men were previously employed by Mr Burrett.

<sup>1</sup>See report by the Engineer-in-Chief of the Public Works Department dated 3 October 1892 – *Appendix to Journals, House of Representatives*, 1892, I. 13.



William Colenso, New  
Zealand's first printer, 1835



Lambton Quay, 1865. Outlined is the first Government Printing Office in  
Wellington



# PROCLAMATION.

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By His Excellency WILLIAM HOBSON, Esquire, Lieutenant-Governor of the British Settlements in progress in New Zealand, &c., &c., &c.

WHEREAS, Her Majesty VICTORIA, Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, has been graciously pleased to Direct, that Measures shall be taken for the Establishment of a Settled form of Civil Government over those of Her Majesty's Subjects who are already settled in New Zealand, or who may hereafter resort thither. And, Whereas, Her Majesty has also been graciously pleased to Direct Letters Patent to be Issued, under the Great Seal of the said United Kingdom, bearing Date the Fifteenth Day of June, in the Year One Thousand Eight Hundred and Thirty nine, by which the former Boundaries of the Colony of New South Wales, are so extended, as to comprehend any part of New Zealand, that is, or may be, acquired in Sovereignty by Her Majesty, Her Heirs, or Successors. And, Whereas, Her Majesty has been further pleased, by a Commission under Her Royal Signet and Sign Manual, bearing Date the Thirtieth Day of January, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Thirty nine, to appoint Me, WILLIAM HOBSON, Esquire, Captain in Her Majesty's Navy, to be Lieutenant-Governor in and over any Territory which is or may be acquired in Sovereignty by Her Majesty, Her Heirs, or Successors, within that Group of Lands in the Pacific Ocean, commonly called New Zealand, and lying between the Latitude Thirty-four Degrees Thirty Minutes and Forty-seven Degrees Two Minutes, South, and One Hundred and Sixty-six Degrees Five Minutes and One Hundred and Seventy-nine Degrees, East Longitude, from the Meridian of Greenwich: Now therefore, I, the said WILLIAM HOBSON, do hereby Declare and Proclaim, that I did, on the Fourteenth Day of January, instant, before His Excellency Sir GEORGE GIPPS, Knight, Captain-General and Governor in Chief, and over the Territory of New South Wales and its Dependencies, and the Executive Council thereof, take the accustomed Oaths of Office as Lieutenant-Governor as aforesaid. And I do hereby further Proclaim and Declare, that I have this Day Opened and Published the Two Commissions aforesaid, that is to say, the Commission under the Great Seal extending the Boundaries of the Government of New South Wales, and the Commission under the Royal Sign Manual appointing Me Lieutenant-Governor, as aforesaid. And I do hereby further Proclaim and Declare, that I have this Day entered on the Duties of my said Office, as Lieutenant-Governor, as aforesaid. And I do call upon all Her Majesty's Subjects to be Aiding and Assisting Me in the Execution thereof.

GIVEN under my Hand and Seal at Kororareka, this Thirtieth day of January, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Forty, and in the Third Year of Her Majesty's Reign.

(SIGNED)

WILLIAM HOBSON, Lieutenant-Governor.

By His Excellency's Command,

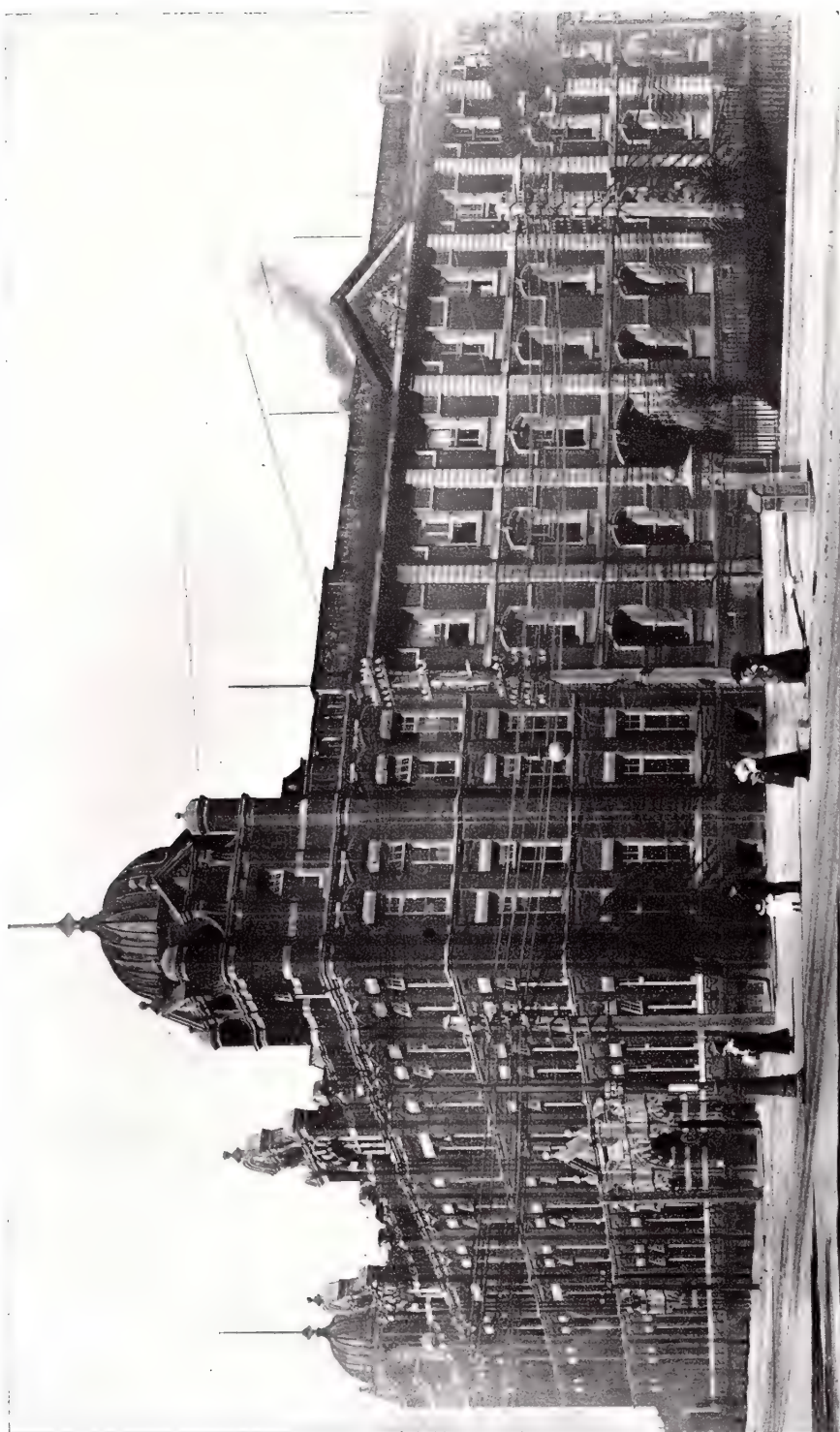
GEORGE COOPER.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN.

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PAHIA: Printed at the Press of the Church Missionary Society.

A copy of the Proclamation by Hobson announcing his appointment as Lieutenant-Governor, printed by Colenso in 1840



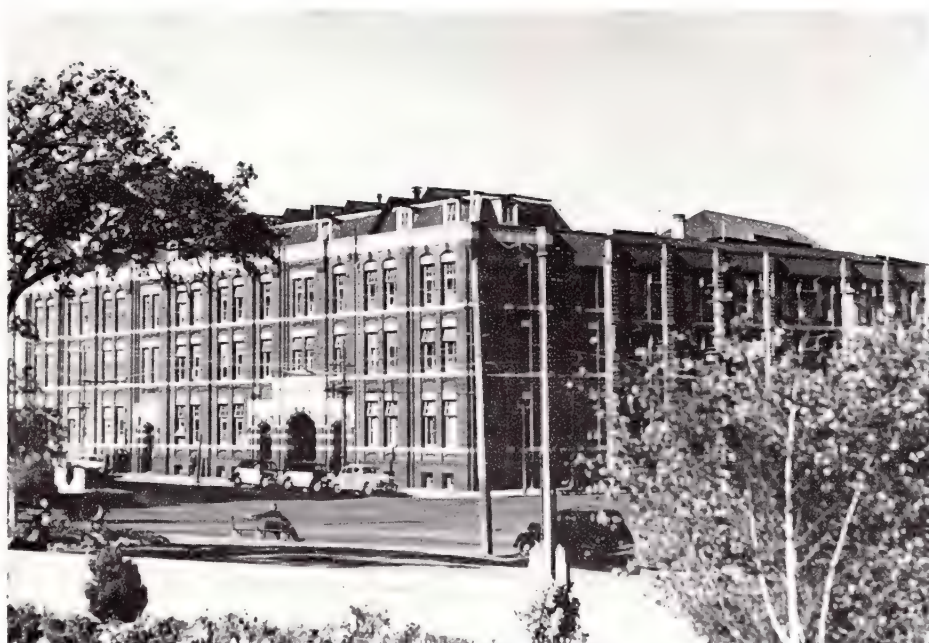
Government Printing Office, photo c. 1907





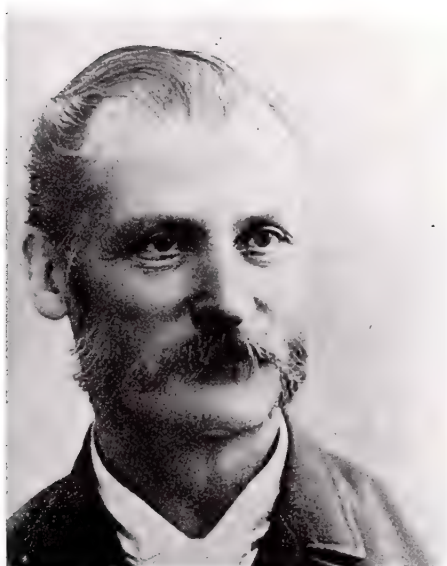
Printing Office dressed in bunting for the visit of Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York, June 1901

Government Printing Office, 1940. The domes, tower, and ornate parts of the building had been demolished earlier as an earthquake risk



GOVERNMENT  
PRINTERS

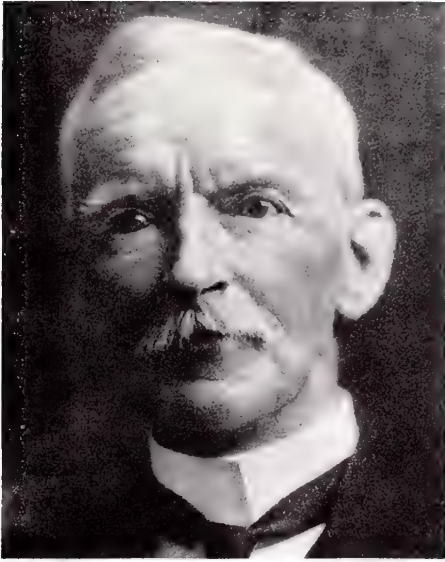
Joseph L. Wilson  
1864-65



George Didsbury  
1865-93

Samuel Costall  
1893-96





John Mackay  
1896-1916



Marcus F. Marks  
1916-22



W. A. G. Skinner  
1922-33



George H. Loney  
1933-37



Ernest V. Paul  
1937-49

Roy E. Owen  
1949 to date





Hand presses, c. 1890

Stereo Room, c. 1900. Belts and driving wheels were unguarded





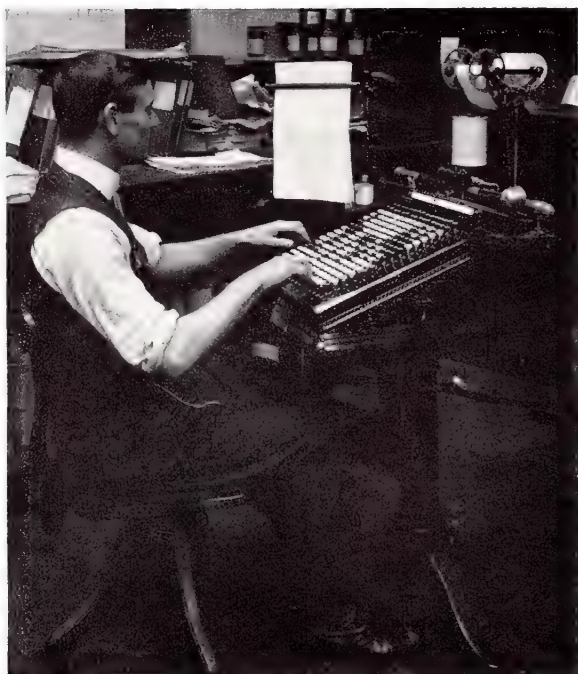
Composing Room, c. 1900

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<i>n</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>.</i>
<i>u</i>							<i>,</i>
<i>o</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>En Quad</i>
<i>i</i>							<i>Em Quad</i>
<i>e</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Thick Space</i>	<i>Thin Space</i>	<i>Middle Space</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>Quadrats</i>
<i>a</i>							

Layout of first type cases used in New Zealand. The cases were made at Kororareka in 1836 to the order of W. Colenso

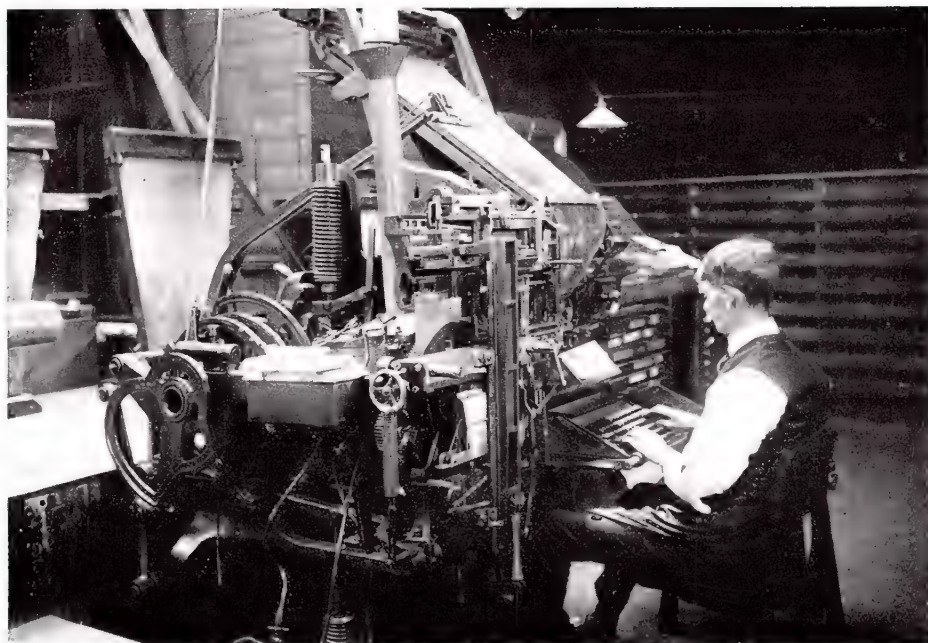




'Monotype' keyboard.  
Introduced in 1903, the  
machines proved an instant  
success

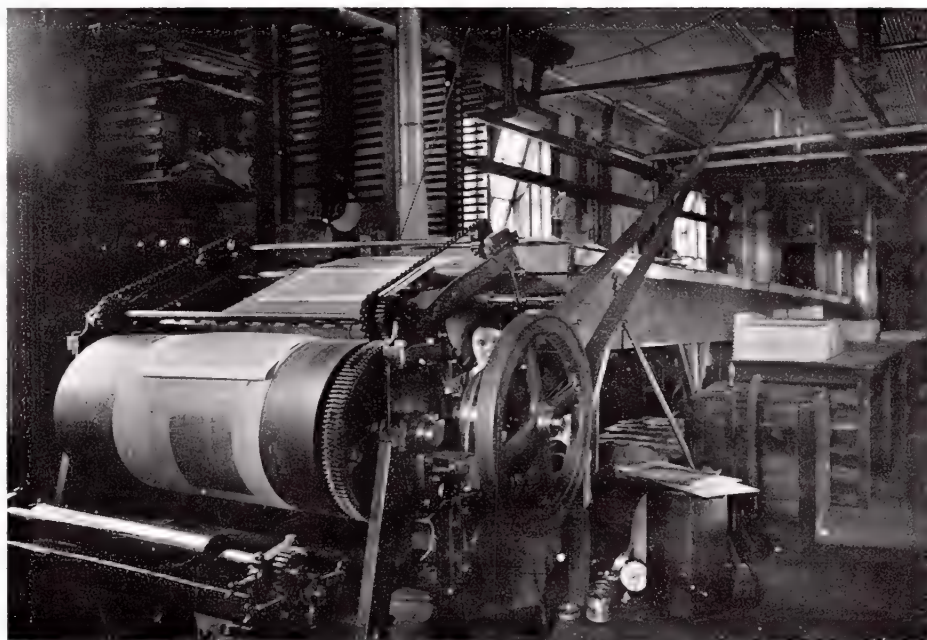
Process Branch, c. 1905





One of the first Linotype machines installed in the Printing Office in 1903

Gumming and varnishing machine, Stamp Printing Branch, c. 1905

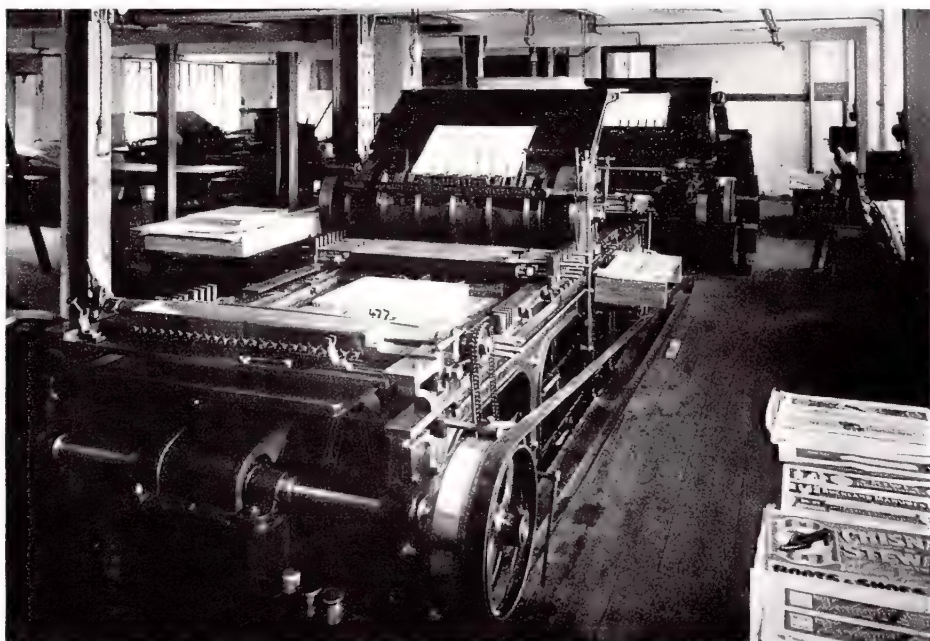




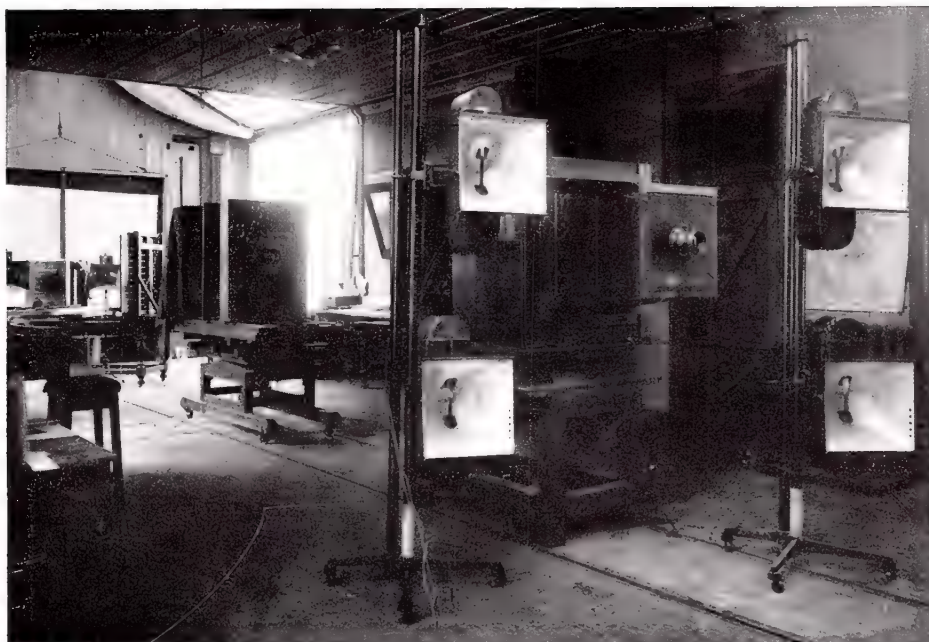


Administration Offices, c. 1920

The forerunner of today's high-speed offset presses, a hand-fed litho press, c. 1925







Camera Room, c. 1925

A corner of the Stamp Printing Branch, c. 1920





Printing Office, partly demolished, 1966

Gazette Room, 1966







Intertype Section, showing part of the battery of 19 Intertype machines, 1966

Reading Room

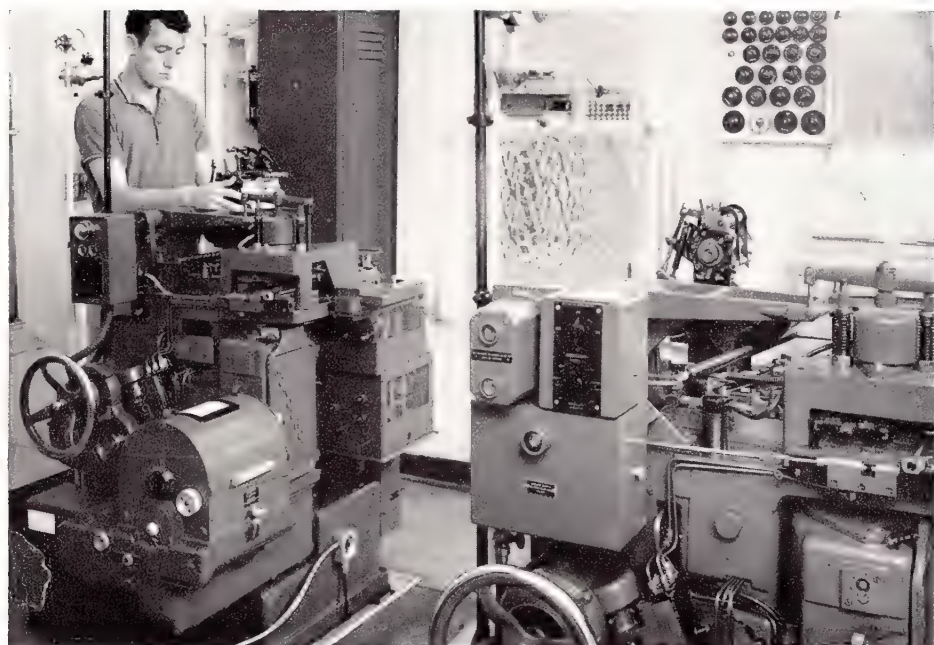






'Monotype' keyboard, adaptable for either hot metal or film composition

'Monophoto' Filmsetters, installed in 1961



## Chapter 7

### THE NEW BUILDING, 1888

THE new building was occupied in September 1888. Its progress had been watched with interest from the rat-infested warren across the road, but the installation of machinery and the erection of engines and boilers took longer than expected. Some changes had been made in the plans, and the building now occupied three sides of a square, with an open courtyard facing Lambton Quay. In style it was functional rather than decorative. Two circular iron stairways in the courtyard gave access to the two upper storeys, a feature designed to conserve space inside the building and to prevent the spread of fire from one storey to another. For the same reasons the lift wells were outside the building.<sup>1</sup>

Well lit and ventilated, each room heated by steam pipes to an even temperature of 60 degrees, the new building was a vast improvement on the old, although the windows in some of the rooms were considered to be too small. There were some minor interruptions while machinery and material were moved across the road from the old building, but no serious inconvenience was suffered. New machinery from overseas replaced the worn-out Wharfedales, some with more than 20 years of service to their credit. In the machine room there were now 14 machines, nearly all of them constantly running. Output increased; new jobs were taken on.<sup>2</sup>

One of these new jobs was the printing of the *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute*, an annual publication of scientific, botanical, geological, historical, and other papers presented to the Institute by experts in various fields. The *Transactions*, first published for the year 1868,<sup>3</sup> were originally printed by private contractors, but the work was taken over in 1888 by the Government Printer. The 1888 volume made 574 pages. Both the Institute and the Government Printer were satisfied with the result. The Printing Office proofreaders, in particular, were praised for their work: "As evidence of the skill and care exercised by the

<sup>1</sup>The bricks are believed to have been made by prison labour in the brick kiln at the Mount Cook jail. Many of them were stamped with the "broad arrow".

<sup>2</sup>The value of work done increased from £24,043 in 1888 to £28,759 in 1889 and £32,487 in 1890, an annual increase of roughly £4,000 in each year.

<sup>3</sup>Volume 1 was reprinted, with some additions, by the Government Printer in 1875.

proofreaders in the Government office, I may mention that a scientific gentleman who contributes largely to the work stated that in eighty pages sent to him for revision he did not detect a single error," Didsbury reported.<sup>1</sup>

The printing of books for private persons by the Printing Office was criticised from time to time, most strongly by private printers themselves. It was claimed that in this way the Government Printer "improperly competed with private offices". This criticism was examined by the Government Printing Committee in 1885 and found to be unwarranted. Evidence given to the Committee showed that the books were printed "for the dissemination of useful knowledge amongst the people of the colony"; that unless they were printed by the State they would not have been printed at all; and that "no pecuniary profit from the printing resulted either to the Government Office or to the authors".

These books, the *Transactions* included, made a valuable contribution to New Zealand's history and to our knowledge of the early years of the colony. Typical among those published in the 1880s was John White's *Ancient History of the Maori* (seven volumes); two works on the eruption at Tarawera, one by S. Percy Smith, Assistant Surveyor-General, the other by Professor F. W. Hutton;<sup>2</sup> and the *Forest Flora of New Zealand*, by Thomas Kirk, illustrated by 142 plates. The last was sold for 12s. 6d., "in order," in Didsbury's words, "to bring this valuable work within the reach of all".

### *Depression and Unemployment*

Financial depression in the eighties and nineties caused unemployment, and for some years the printing trade was hard hit. At the Government Printing Office in 1888 there were no fewer than 20 men on "half-time". Some printers, especially in country

<sup>1</sup>A similar tribute to the work of the Department was paid some years later by Dr Hocken in the introduction to his *Bibliography of the Literature Relating to New Zealand* (619 pp.), published by the Government Printer in 1909. Hocken expresses his "most grateful thanks" to the Government Printing Department for "unremitting care and attention during the progress of this work". He continues: "The Government Printer has taken great interest in it, both before and since it was placed in his hands. The Supervisor's remarkable knowledge of his work has been of the most constant and inestimable value. The Reader, upon whom the compilation of the index principally devolved, has also rendered invaluable service. To his work may well be applied the Maori saying on the title-page, '*He mabi nui rawa atu*' - 'Truly this is a very laborious deed.' No pains have been spared to make the index comprehensive and copious."

The index itself occupied 64 pages, two columns to the page, set in 8 pt.

<sup>2</sup>Percy Smith's book fared badly in the fire which destroyed the old Government Printing Office in October 1890. Over a thousand copies were destroyed. Professor Hutton's book suffered only minor loss - 84 copies.



districts, preferred to employ non-union labour at lower rates of pay or packed their staffs with boys. Men who had been in permanent positions for years were thrown out of employment.<sup>1</sup> In 1892 there were still many "comps" out of work; in that year there were more members of the Wellington Typographical Union unemployed than at any previous time in the union's history.

Members of the staff of the Government Printing Office took a prominent part in the affairs of this union, not always with the blessing of the Government Printer. In 1888 the secretary of the union, Tom L. Mills, was employed at the Printing Office. Didsbury objected to Government employees taking part in union matters and offered Mills the choice of resigning his position as secretary of the union or of resigning from the composing staff. Mills, a strong union man, resigned from the Printing Office.<sup>2</sup> A deputation of six waited on the Colonial Secretary requesting a decision on the right of Government employees to hold office in trade unions. The Colonial Secretary replied by letter on 18 July: "Relative to the rule which has been in force with regard to members of the Typographical Society, I have to intimate that it has been determined that no obstacle shall be placed in the way of any printer employed by the Government holding any office in such Society".

Several members of the Printing Office staff served on the society's executive committee for a number of years, and one president, W. A. G. Skinner (1899-1904), was later Government Printer.

### *Fire Destroys Old Printing Office*

George Didsbury had reason for pride in his new establishment. It was doing more work; it was doing it more quickly; and it was doing it more cheaply – there was less outlay in overtime, for instance, and the expenses under the heading "fuel and gas" were almost £300 less in 1889 than for the previous year. But shocks were in store.

<sup>1</sup>The indignant protest of one Wellington "comp", discharged after 47 years' service when the *New Zealand Times* closed down, that he would not have taken the job had he known it would not be permanent is recorded by R. A. McKay in an article in *A History of Printing in New Zealand, 1830-1940*. This handsome book, edited by McKay, was produced by the Wellington Club of Printing House Craftsmen in 1940 to commemorate New Zealand's centennial. The section on the Government Printing Office was written by K. B. Longmore, a former member of the staff of the Printing Office and now chairman of the New Zealand Apple and Pear Marketing Board.

<sup>2</sup>He was later well known as a musical and dramatic critic and book reviewer for the *Evening Post*, and later still as editor and part proprietor of the *Feilding Star*.

The first of these came about 2 a.m. on 8 October 1890 when the night watchman, quietly making his rounds through the rambling passageways of the old building, was jolted into full alertness by the sound of an explosion. He went to investigate and was driven back by flames, which already had a firm hold in the Lithographic Branch's rooms in the upper storey of the southern wing. The fire brigade was summoned by the ringing of the Hill Street firebell; but when the firemen entered the bottom storey of the building they were forced to withdraw when lithographic stones and molten lead began to fall through the ceiling.<sup>1</sup> They could do little more than prevent the flames spreading to neighbouring buildings, several of which were badly scorched. In less than half an hour the building was gutted and its contents destroyed. Neither building nor contents was insured.<sup>2</sup>

The *New Zealand Times* regretted the loss in its leading article, criticised the lack of insurance, and suggested that salvage corps might have saved some of the contents. The article ran:

"We have lost the old printing office which we all abused so dreadfully for so many years. From that old building has issued a vast procession of printed matter. Statutes, Hansards, Parliamentary Papers, in all their multitudinous array, marshalled under distinguishing letters that the political student knows so well, have passed out through the venerable portals, jostling the numerous troops of the great army of stationery. Blue Book and Folio and Foolscap and Note, telegraph form and surveyor's plan, map and envelope of every size and variety have swept out in ceaseless tide. How all that work was done in such a rookery, how the people who did it survived their labours, how much better the private firms in this enterprising Colony could have done it – these are the speculations which have been alive throughout the history of the old House. A vast manufactory of records it was, as old as the Colony, and but one history ever tried to come out of it, and that was cut off in the midst of its promising childhood by the fire that swept away the whole venerable ruin.

"We have lost the time-honoured barrack of many memories and more passages, and we have also lost a deal of money – the estimate is £20,000. It is not the first time that fire loss has damaged public property to the tune of five figures with two

<sup>1</sup>A lithographic stone measuring 60 in. by 40 in. weighs almost a ton.

<sup>2</sup>During the 25 years this building was occupied by the Printing Office, no fewer than nine additions and alterations were made to the premises to keep pace with the Department's growing requirements.

tens in the record. Why not insure? The official answer is that insurance would not pay. It has been calculated that if all the public buildings had been insured for a series of years the Colony would, after receiving payment for losses, have been considerably out of pocket. But that, if correct, only proves that the ordinary rates are prohibitive. Why not set apart an insurance fund based on rates that would meet the ascertained rate of loss? It may not pay to insure with the insurance offices in the ordinary way. But it can never pay to lose thousands of pounds by fire.

"Besides memories and money's worth we have to deplore the loss of documents and records which is irreparable. Was it avoidable? As long as there is not a salvage corps in the Government Buildings, properly equipped with appliances for rapidly saving property, so long must it be held that these irreparable losses are avoidable. Had there been a corps of that sort, provided with canvas shoots ready at a moment's notice to be fastened to fixtures in the roadway, its members would have known the documents and books to save, and might have saved them on Wednesday night. This fire then points to two necessities – the necessity of providing a salvage corps properly equipped in all the Government Buildings, and the necessity for establishing a fund for the insurance of Government property."

The history "cut off in the midst of its promising childhood" was White's *Ancient History of the Maori*, of which over 1,200 copies of Volumes II to V were destroyed. A thousand copies of Sir George Grey's *Polynesian Mythology* were also lost, besides a large quantity of Government publications, some early *Hansards*, and some 40 cases of printing paper, stationery, and other material. The Lithographic Branch of the Lands and Survey Department lost all its valuable lithographic and photographic plant; the Customs Department lost some instruments and a number of registers; Treasury lost "a great number of volumes of vouchers". Most of the building was being used as a store, all the printing machinery and plant having fortunately been removed to the new building.<sup>1</sup>

The court of inquiry held by the District Coroner, with a jury of six, on 17 October could find no evidence as to how the fire began. The night watchman thought it was caused by a gas explosion; both meters were on and several explosions took place during the fire. There was some talk of wax matches being used in

<sup>1</sup>A detached building at the rear of the old premises, used as a store for departmental forms, was only partially destroyed, and some of the forms, damaged by water, were recovered.



the building. But if the fire did nothing else, it at least disposed of an eyesore. It also hastened the use of electricity in other Government buildings; within a fortnight the Minister for Public Works had given instructions for the preparation of an estimate of the cost of lighting by electricity the Government Buildings, themselves threatened by sparks during the blaze.

The work of the Printing Office continued to increase spectacularly, and by the end of 1890 it was already apparent that the plant in the new building would have to be extended to keep pace with the demands made on it. The need for typesetting machinery soon became evident, the amount of standing type sometimes causing a shortage of particular "sorts" and consequent inconvenience. A typesetting foundry was later installed in the Stereotype Branch.

### *Twelve and a Half Miles of Hansard*

1891 was the twenty-fifth year that the Government Printing Office had published *Hansard*. In that quarter century the debates had filled 75 volumes, a total of 53,079 pages; in length of columns this was a little over  $12\frac{1}{2}$  miles, an average of half a mile per session. The number of copies printed had increased from 1,000 in 1867 to 4,700 in 1891; each member of the House now received 30 free copies where originally he had been given five. With such a large free list, the number of paying subscribers was regrettably small; but members still complained that they could not supply the demands of their constituents, and the Government Printer's suggestions to reduce the free issues were either ignored or met only by token economies. At his suggestion the price of *Hansard* was reduced by half, and local postmasters were appointed agents to facilitate its sale. But the public remained indifferent to the bargain, and even by 1891 there were fewer than 500 subscribers.

With a steady stream of Government publications now flowing from the presses, room had to be found to store them. The cellars of the Government Buildings were used but were quickly found unsuitable: they were flooded several times by storm water. "They are always more or less damp," Didsbury reported in July 1892. Many of the publications stored there were of considerable value and in a few years would be unobtainable, he said. Unless a more suitable place was found for them they would soon become valueless "owing to the damp and the ravages made by rats".

The new building too, occupied only four years, was also being criticised. The "comps" complained about the light; the windows

of the composing room were admittedly too small. Enlarging them would weaken the structure, and it was decided to transfer the composing room from the first floor to the top storey and to install skylights in the roof. These changes were recommended by the Government Printing Office Committee appointed by the House to investigate these and other complaints.

Most of these complaints were hardy annuals: the master printers' association still considered that the Government Printing Office was interfering with private enterprise by printing too many books written by private authors, and the compositors on piecework were dissatisfied with the rate for certain jobs. The Committee agreed with both groups of complainants. "Looking at the list of books printed and published by the Government Printer," it reported in October 1892, "it is impossible to find any good reason for having spent public money upon them." It recommended that no printing should be executed at the Government Printing Office "which is not official in its character"; and that some Government work should be distributed among local printers where they could do the job as cheaply as could the Printing Office. The Committee also expressed its opinion that "literary work of a private or semi-private character, like all other kinds of work, should depend upon the support to which its merits entitle it".

New Zealand's master printers had experienced a number of lean years and the Committee's sympathy with their representations is easy to understand, even if some of the comments in its report are hardly fair to the Government Printer. The "comps" had had their lean years too, and were not yet out of the wood.<sup>1</sup> There had been some friction between the piecework men and the Government Printer over the rate paid for setting the *Law Reports* (published monthly) and the *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute*, an annual publication. After hearing evidence the Committee recommended an increase in the rate of 2d. per thousand, or, as an alternative, that the work be done on a time basis at the usual rate of wages.<sup>2</sup>

The Committee was also critical of the amount of unnecessary printing done, and quoted as evidence the 53 tons of waste paper sold by the Government Printer in 1891. It considered the Printing

<sup>1</sup>See pp. 84-5.

<sup>2</sup>In 1893 the ordinary rate for composition, either solid or leaded, was 1s. 1d. per 1,000 ens. A special rate of 1s. 3d. per 1,000 ens was allowed on "works of a technical or scientific character" and 1s. 4d. for *Hansard*. "Maori and all foreign languages to be paid one-third extra." - *Rules and Regulations of the Printing and Stationery Department*, 1893.

Office's annual expenditure "very large" – £36,245 on the current estimates – a cause being "the mass of papers and documents of no practical use which are printed and then thrown aside". The members of the Government and of the Legislature "are alike to blame in moving that returns be printed in large numbers which nobody ever reads." "Your Committee have arrived at the conviction that the Printing Office has outgrown the necessary limitations of such an establishment, and is already assuming proportions beyond adequate supervision and control," said the report.

*'A faithful, capable public servant'*

On 20 April 1893, after a short illness, George Didsbury died at his home on The Terrace. He was 54. For some time he had suffered from diabetes, which had much weakened him. The strains and responsibilities of 28 years at the head of the Printing Office, with the triple duties of Government Printer, Manager of the Stationery Store, and Controller of Stamp Printing, had drawn heavily on his physical reserves, and an attack of peritonitis proved fatal.

"During those eight and twenty years of solid steady service he built for himself his monument . . .," said the *New Zealand Times*. "Blue Books, Hansards, statistics, official publications of all sorts, these are the bricks with which the vast scattered edifice was built. They are piled up in every public office, and every library public and private throughout the land; they are to be seen in other countries too; and on every one occurs the monumental inscription 'George Didsbury, Government Printer, Wellington.'"

"Their unvarying accuracy, neatness and workmanlike finish bear testimony to the capacity of the man who presided over the work . . . His power of work was for years unflagging, in managing his men he was fair and firm, just and masterful, genial and of equable temper. In the hurry and bustle of the session time . . . George Didsbury kept his head cool, and the working of his department smooth. . . . From year's end to year's end the best work came with steady regularity out of his office, and the service was economical as well as efficient. He was a faithful, capable public servant, who will be missed as greatly as he is regretted."

Printers are kept far too busy recording the events of the day to place on record their own lives and achievements. Apart from the *Times* obituary and his own reports, little is recorded of Didsbury's work as Government Printer. During his regime the staff of the



Printing Office increased from 10 to almost 200, but their numbers fluctuated considerably according to the demands of the parliamentary sessions.

Didsbury is said to have been the originator of the famous "Didsbury notice". Out of the blue a "comp" might find on his frame a slip of paper: "Mr. —, in consequence of the work falling off, I shall not require your services after Saturday week, the 6th August. Geo. Didsbury, 29/7/87." So runs a notice preserved in a scrapbook. It is on plain paper, without official letterhead. At one time Didsbury tried to soften the blow when work was short by employing a number of married men on half time so that they could at least keep their homes going and their families fed, and thus avoid the necessity of having to move from the district in search of work. A "comp" out of work might receive a telegram: "There is a frame waiting for you if you like to come back. Didsbury."

Didsbury also had the habit of stabbing at his pad with pen or pencil to emphasise points made in discussion. It is recorded that his frame of mind could sometimes be judged by the number of broken pens and pencils on his desk. With a responsible job, far too much to do himself, deadlines to meet with parliamentary papers, ministerial demands to attend to, politicians to placate, committees of investigation to answer, staff problems, accommodation problems, equipment problems — is it any wonder that the strains of office took their toll?

#### *Samuel Costall Becomes Government Printer*

Didsbury was succeeded in June 1893 by his chief clerk and accountant, Samuel Costall. Mr Costall was an Englishman, from Boston, Lincolnshire. He had been a "comp" on the *Wellington Independent* and on various newspapers in Nelson before joining his eldest brother, James, on the staff of the Printing Office in 1869. Quick and energetic, he had graduated from the stone to a desk job as clerk in Didsbury's office, relieving the latter of many of the clerical duties which beset him in the early years. When the Stationery Store was placed under the Government Printer's control in 1879, Samuel Costall was appointed Chief Clerk and Accountant. He had a sharp eye for an economy — it was he who had suggested the establishment of the Binding Branch in 1873, with consequent savings in costs — and much of the credit for the improved financial position of the Printing Office during some difficult years rests on his shoulders. He was an active churchman,

a member of the committee of management of the Sunday School Union, and also took an interest in the work of the YMCA.<sup>1</sup>

The responsibilities of Government Printer did not lie easily on Costall's shoulders. With many printers out of work, the Wellington Typographical Union sought the abolition of overtime in the Government Printing Office so that employment could be found for some of its members. Not all the Printing Office staff were in favour of this move by any means, but with the union continuing to press its case friction arose between the Government Printer and certain members of his staff. At Costall's direction, one of these union members was superseded when a temporary vacancy arose as overseer in charge of the night staff; this caused a stoppage of work on the Budget. In August 1895 three of the "comps" addressed letters of complaint to the Colonial Secretary, and followed this in January 1896 with a further letter charging the Government Printer with unfair treatment of his staff, maladministration, favouritism, falsification of accounts, and immoral behaviour. A Royal Commission was set up in March to inquire into these charges – 15 in all. The hearing of evidence took more than three weeks. Many of the charges were not substantiated; others were abandoned. But the Commission did find some of Mr Costall's behaviour "somewhat suspicious". On the specific charge of falsification of wages sheets, Cabinet on 9 May requested his resignation. The services as permanent hands of the three chief complainants were also dispensed with. It was an unfortunate affair, notable for the amount of mud thrown and the "rancorous animosity" of the accusers. It was a sad ending to Samuel Costall's long career in the Printing Office.

Costall's brother James, Didsbury's superintending overseer for 27 years, retired because of ill health in April 1892.<sup>2</sup> He was succeeded by one of the old "originals", James Burns, who had been a "comp" in the Government Printing Office in Auckland in 1864. After the move to Wellington he was promoted foreman and for many years was in charge of the printing of *Hansard*.

Burns retired in 1901. John James Gamble, whose record of service as compositor and overseer in the Printing Office almost equalled Burns's, succeeded him as superintending overseer.<sup>3</sup> Mr Gamble, a native of Guernsey, was a former president of the Wellington Typographical Union.

<sup>1</sup>He was succeeded as chief clerk and accountant by Bertram Allen, the Department's computer and a chess player of interprovincial calibre.

<sup>2</sup>He was granted a pension in July 1892 and died at Muritai, Eastbourne, on 29 July 1923, aged 92. He left a family of 12, 23 grandchildren, and 13 great-grandchildren.

<sup>3</sup>Burns had joined the staff of the Printing Office on 1 September 1864, Gamble on 1 May 1865.

*Hansard Supervisor Appointed*

Another appointment of note in the mid nineties was that of Marcus F. Marks as *Hansard* supervisor. Delays in the production of *Hansard* had long been a vexing question, with the blame placed in turn on the reporting staff ("inaccurate reporting"), on the members of Parliament themselves for their dilatoriness in returning proofs or for making unnecessary corrections,<sup>1</sup> and on the staff of the Printing Office. In October 1895 the Reporting Debates and Printing Committee of the House inquired into these problems; and although its major recommendations were an expression of confidence in the competence of the Chief Reporter and the appointment of an additional reporter in the gallery, some recommendations made by Marks (who was then *Hansard* reader) were favourably received and he was subsequently appointed *Hansard* supervisor. He held this position for 20 years.

Marks had joined the staff of the Printing Office in 1877 as an apprentice, aged 13. In his reminiscences, *Memories (Mainly Merry)*, he describes his first day at work:<sup>2</sup>

"Shall I ever forget my first day at work at the Government Printing Office? A lad of thirteen amongst an army of grown-up and fully fledged printers – the 'hardest cases' in the world.

"My position was that of a Reader's boy, and my chief had little sympathy with my nervousness and lack of ability to read the MS. as one would read a newspaper.

"In those days there were no typewriters. Some of the MS. – Great Scot! – I deciphered at the rate of about five words a minute! Beads of perspiration came on my brow.

"Mowbray's school was almost next door; and when, in the depth of my misery (at eleven in the morning), I heard my playmates of yesterday 'bounding out of school,' it took all my resolution to keep the tears back. I stuttered out the words to the best of my ability, but the old Reader always added to my nervousness by urging me to 'Get on! Get on!'

"He was a good man – full of wisdom and commonsense. Poor soul! He stood it as long as he could, and then sent me on some message as a pretext, so that he might get in my place one

<sup>1</sup>"... in consequence of the dilatoriness of honourable members in correcting proofs," the Reporting Debates and Printing Committee of the House found it necessary during the 1895 session to issue an instruction to the Government Printer to go to press upon the expiry of the time allowed for the return of proofs. Speeches which had not been corrected by members were to be distinguished by an asterisk.

<sup>2</sup>pp. 51–2. Published by Endeavour Press, Sydney, Australia, 1934.



of the other lads who had been 'through the mill,' and could read the quaint MS. as the Chinese can read the script of his language.

"As soon as I had left the room the old man (the Reader) exploded. 'Great God!' he said to the lad who had taken my place, 'aren't there enough Christians in the world without bringing an incompetent Hebrew youngster to help me?'"

"Many months elapsed before I heard of the old man's outburst. In that time I had gained confidence, was able better to decipher the spider-like characteristics of the MS., and understand my chief better. Indeed, as time went on, I learned to have a great respect – nay, affection – for the old gentleman."

Marks completed his six years' apprenticeship in June 1883, but, times being bad in the printing trade in New Zealand, all single "comps" in the Printing Office were dismissed at the end of the parliamentary session and he went to Australia. During his apprenticeship he had learnt shorthand, a qualification which helped him to find employment on newspapers in Sydney and Melbourne, where he also worked in various printing houses. An offer of re-employment from George Didsbury brought him back to the Printing Office in 1886, and a few months later he was promoted to the reading staff, graduating to the responsible position of *Hansard* reader.

As *Hansard* supervisor Marks was an instant success. The reporters' copy came to him direct; he forwarded it to members for correction, subedited their speeches, supervised the copy through the press. Where formerly reports of parliamentary debates lagged well behind the debates themselves, they now appeared within a few days. Marcus Marks was a bluff man, an entertaining raconteur with a picturesque vocabulary; his energy and drive and keen sense of humour were well suited to his new position.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>During the parliamentary recess he was employed as copy supervisor.

## Chapter 8

### FURTHER EXPANSION AND PROGRESS

IN the meantime the Printing Office had acquired a new head. On Sam Costall's departure in May 1896, John Mackay, manager of the job-printing department of the Dunedin *Evening Star*, was appointed Government Printer.<sup>1</sup> Mackay, Scottish born, was educated in Dunedin. He learnt the trade of printer in Milton at the *Bruce Herald*, owned by his brother, and later established himself as a printer in Dunedin. After various business partnerships and a period abroad to widen his knowledge of the industry, he became factory manager for the *Evening Star*. He left the *Star* to become Government Printer.

A dignified man with wide experience of the trade, first as a compositor and later in the management of printing offices, Mackay was well qualified for his new appointment. He was a man of high principles, a Presbyterian and a church elder; he is said to have always worn a frock coat. But, above all, he was a master printer in the true sense of the term, a splendid organiser, a man of business and foresight in his trade.

Although occupied less than 10 years, the new Printing Office was already too small to cope with the amount of work that flowed into the Government's presses. In 1896-97 a new four-storey wing was built on the Lambton Quay frontage; a report of that time described it as "a noble looking pile". At either end it boasted a tower and dome; an ornate covered archway gave access to the centre courtyard, mercifully hidden from view; two further rooftop embellishments added to its rather baroque appearance.<sup>2</sup> Tablets over the doorways commemorated Louis Daguerre and Niepce, co-discoverers of the daguerreotype photographic process; Alois Senefelder, the German inventor of lithography; William Caxton and Johann Gutenberg, printers.

<sup>1</sup>James Burns acted as Government Printer for a brief period before Mackay was appointed on 15 June 1896. The job was widely advertised and there were 44 applications for it.

<sup>2</sup>See photograph on p. 69. Most of these adornments were later removed because of the threat of damage from earthquake.

The building was of brick, with stone facings. A single-storey annexe at its northern end housed the Stamp Printing Branch and an engineer's workshop. A low picket fence and hedge separated the annexe from the footpath on the Quay.

### *The Advent of Machine Typesetting*

Early in 1897 Wellington "comps" were disturbed by rumours that the "dreaded linotypes" were to be introduced to local printing offices. Five machines had already been installed in Auckland;<sup>1</sup> with jobs already hard to find, the introduction of mechanical typesetting threatened many skilled men with unemployment.

In Wellington the Typographical Union obtained an assurance from employers that they had no intention at that time of introducing the new machines into their printing works. Before the end of 1898, 10 machines had been installed in two of the city's newspaper offices. Some "comps" lost their jobs: in 1899 the Wellington Typographical Union paid out in unemployment allowances the largest amount in any of its first 50 years. But this was only a temporary setback. Newspapers quickly increased the number of their pages, and there was soon more work for everyone.

The advantages of machine typesetting were obvious.<sup>2</sup> It was quicker, cleaner, less difficult to master than the laborious skill of setting type by hand; the backbreaking hours spent over the typescases spelling out each word letter by letter, space by space, were replaced by the speed and skills of the touch typist; the long chore of distributing type letter by letter to its correct place in the case when the forme was printed was gone for ever. Each letter was freshly cast, its serifs and descenders sharp and clean and unbroken. Each line was of uniform height. The old problems of worn-out letters and uneven printing surfaces were practically eliminated.

For some reason for which no explanation has been found, no annual reports were submitted by the Government Printer for the period from 1893 to 1915. For this reason alone, the achievements of Didsbury's successors, Sam Costall and John Mackay, are difficult to record. Mackay's 20 years in the Government service

<sup>1</sup>At the *Auckland Star*. The machines were Mergenthalers, named after their inventor, a German who emigrated to the United States, where his first machine was built in 1886.

<sup>2</sup>Colenso's comment in a letter of 19 January 1899 expressed the bewilderment of an old craftsman. He said he "Should like to see the Linotype, cannot understand it". Colenso died three weeks later.



were years of rapid technological progress, beginning with the advent of the "dreaded linotypes" and ending with the introduction to New Zealand of the photo-offset camera in 1914. After some initial caution two linotype and two monotype machines were installed in the Printing Office in 1903. The "monos" proved the more suitable of the two, and in the following year three more of them and two casters were added. The monotypes were then new to New Zealand, but for the Government Printer's work – especially for tabulated matter – they proved an instant success.<sup>1</sup>

### *The Last of the Originals*

John Gamble retired as Superintending Overseer in 1905 and was succeeded by Frank Rogers. One of Joseph Wilson's first "boys" in the Auckland office in 1864, Rogers spent 43 years in the Department's service. In April 1892 he was appointed sub-overseer of the night staff; in 1902 overseer in charge of the Time Room; his promotion to Superintending Overseer dated from 1 April 1905. He retired on 31 December 1908, taking with him a letter of thanks from the Government Printer, John Mackay, "for your close application to duty during the time we have been associated". Frank Rogers was the last of the original staff serving with the Printing Office.

His successor was a future Government Printer, W. A. G. Skinner, initials long remembered by a generation of schoolboys from the imprint in the *School Journals* of the 1920s. Like Marcus Marks, George Skinner entered the Government service as a reader's boy; like Marks, he had also attended William Mowbray's school in Sydney Street. He joined the staff of the Printing Office in October 1879, aged 14, and served his apprenticeship as a compositor. In 1889 he was transferred to Lyttelton as warden of the printing office at the Lyttelton Jail.

He was chosen for this job by Didsbury and appointed to the staff of the Prisons Department. But wardens are almost as closely confined as those in their care, and in January 1894 Skinner applied to the Government Printer to be reinstated in the Printing Office, having found "the long hours and close confinement" telling on his health. He subsequently resigned from the prisons service and returned to Wellington, where he rejoined the staff of the Printing

<sup>1</sup>The monotype was invented by an American, Tolbert Lanston, in 1885. According to McKay, "squirts" were frequent on these early machines "and many operators received severe burns". – R. A. McKay, article on "Cavalcade of Printing" in *A History of Printing in New Zealand, 1830–1940*.

Office.<sup>1</sup> In 1905 he was appointed overseer of the jobbing room, and four years later he became Superintending Overseer. The title of this appointment was later changed to Superintendent.

### *Machinery Hazards*

Features of these days which the old photographs reveal are the monster driving belts which drove the machines from overhead shafting. These belts and driving wheels were unguarded, and they must have caused some anxious moments when working at speed. The shafting could be controlled only from the engine room, in which a 70 h.p. single-cylinder steam engine ran continuously during working hours. Solid 9 in. belts led this power from floor to floor, and then by overhead shafting to the various machines. A twisted belt on one machine could bring all production to a halt.

A similar steam engine driving a 100-volt dynamo provided the lighting for the building at night, but the local electricity supply was used during the day. Not all the rooms were connected to the local supply, and during the parliamentary session it was necessary for the engineer and fireman to come back on duty to keep steam up to supply light for these rooms.

In addition to flapping driving belts, the lifts were another hazard. The two hydraulic lifts were completely unguarded and were considered "very dangerous". If a lift was left at the upper floors for several days, the water in the cylinders drained away, so that when a load was placed in the lift it would sometimes drop a considerable distance.

Under Mackay's direction the Department was welded into a fully equipped and efficient unit. Modern machinery tripled its production figures; improvements in organisation reduced delays. More staff were engaged to speed the flow of work; and inevitably the building became too small to accommodate the machines and the vast stores of paper they consumed and the men who served them.<sup>2</sup> Cases were stacked high in passages and in odd corners, but the demands for space could not long be deferred. A new wing of ferroconcrete and brick was begun on the Featherston Street frontage in 1913, but before it was completed New Zealand was at war.

<sup>1</sup>The Lyttelton Jail printing office was subsequently closed down. With many printers out of work in the 1890s, it was not considered desirable that prison labour should compete with free labour. – *N.Z.P.D.*, 1897, Vol. 99.

<sup>2</sup>The basement was later excavated and used as a paper store. Previously it had been necessary to store some paper in the yard under tarpaulins.

## *Chapter 9*

### THE FIRST WORLD WAR, 1914-18

THE Printing Office was hard hit by these four years of war. By March 1918 over 100 of its employees were in camp in New Zealand or overseas on active service. Others had been passed fit and were waiting to be called up. Some of these, of course, were skilled tradesmen, difficult to replace; but the apprentices also were well represented in the numbers overseas.<sup>1</sup>

Those left behind faced paper shortages, shipping difficulties, and the weekly grind of long hours of overtime. After the introduction of conscription in August 1916, the names of men drawn in the ballots for overseas service were published periodically. These ballots necessitated many hours of work. Some issues contained 60 or 70 pages of names, closely printed, each name meticulously checked. Among these names there would inevitably appear those of members of the staff, and as each man was called up fewer would be left to share the tasks. Over 8,000 copies of each ballot were printed.

During four years of war the price of paper rose by nearly 400 per cent. Paper mills cut production; British factories switched to making munitions. Ships could not be spared from wartime convoys to carry supplies to New Zealand. Newspapers and magazines were reduced in size, economies were enforced in the use of stationery and wrapping paper, a cardboard box was something to be treasured, envelopes became almost unobtainable, departmental reports were pruned and pruned again, Government forms were reduced in size and numbers. In England a Royal Commission on Paper urged economies "in the national interest", and schemes were organised to save waste paper and rags of every kind and to collect them for further processing. Marcus Marks, Mackay's successor as Government Printer from 1 July 1916,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Public Service classification list of 1 April 1918 includes 46 of the Department's staff absent with the 1st NZEF, eight of them apprentices. Another 11 men are described as "Discharged from Expeditionary Force". A compositor, Private William James Henry of the New Zealand Medical Corps, won a D.C.M.

<sup>2</sup>Marks wrote: "The office has gone ahead very considerably since Mr Mackay took charge, and he carries with him on his retirement the respect of those who have served under him." John Mackay died at Wellington on 3 March 1937, aged 86.



stressed the need for still further economies in his annual reports. Departmental reports, already condensed, could be cut further still, he wrote in June 1916.

During the war the new wing on Featherston Street was completed. Marks was delighted with the addition: "I do not know, and cannot conceive, better machine printing-rooms in the southern hemisphere," he reported in June 1917. The new building, comprising three storeys and basement, was well lighted and well planned. It gave the machinists ideal conditions to work in, relieved the congestion which had hampered some of the branches, and allowed branches whose work was closely associated to be brought together. The new wing was heated with hot-water pipes and contained an electric cargo lift and two electric hoists.

Electricity continued to replace steam as the driving power for the machinery. During the war, and for some years afterwards, two shifts were worked in the machine room to cope with the work, although staff shortages in the war years sometimes made the night shift (from 6 p.m. to 2.30 a.m.) hard to fill. Faster and better machinery was the obvious answer.<sup>1</sup>

In 1918 there were 44 motors driving the machinery, most of them electric. Some machines urgently needed replacing, but most had to carry on until the war ended. Mackay's policy of introducing modern machinery when replacements were necessary was continued by his successor. "It is poor policy to work with antiquated and expensive machinery when up-to-date labour-saving devices can be secured," Marks wrote in June 1917. Orders were placed in England for a rotary flat-bed printing machine and a disc-ruling machine – both urgently required – but neither was received until after the war ended. Four new monotype casters and a monometer furnace for melting metal into ingots for the casters and linotypes were added to the plant in 1917, and these enabled the night staff of casters to be dispensed with.

The war over, conditions slowly returned to normal.<sup>2</sup> Men came back from overseas and returned to their jobs. The Printing Office was more fortunate than some other businesses in that most of the men returned in good health, and (in Marks's words) "have rapidly regained their pre-war usefulness". Wherever possible, preference was given to returned soldiers in filling vacancies on

<sup>1</sup>Marks wrote in 1920: "The work of Government printing is growing so fast that it is necessary to get the best of machinery to keep pace with it." New machines cost from 100 to 150 per cent more in 1922 than they did before the war.

<sup>2</sup>The influenza epidemic of 1918 caused widespread sickness amongst the staff. An inhalation chamber was established in the Printing Office. One man recorded his private opinion that "These chambers gave many people the flu".

the staff, but in a technical Department like the Printing Office few vacancies existed for other than qualified tradesmen.<sup>1</sup>

The wartime shortages of paper took a long time to surmount, and for two or three years stocks had to be watched carefully and economies enforced. Prices remained high for some years. Stationery prices after the war were "abnormal"; for some binding materials "startling" – the words quoted are the Government Printer's. Envelopes, in particular, were difficult to obtain. But gradually the mills in Canada and England overtook the shortages and more ships became available to deliver orders.<sup>2</sup> It was 1921 before Marks found himself free from the anxiety with which he had nursed the country's supplies of paper for the last five years. In his annual reports he still urged economies: "... the fact that the market has grown easier should not result in extravagance in the ordering of matter to be printed," he wrote in August 1921. It was still necessary to cut down requisitions.

The shortage of machinery took even longer to correct. Manufacturers were swamped with orders and deliveries were slow. Machinery ordered during the war was not received until two years after the war had ended: the disc-ruling machine ordered in 1916 did not arrive until 1920. During the year ended 31 March 1921, £7,000 was spent on new machinery and commitments made for a further £6,000. Four new letterpress machines (a quad-crown and two double-royal Wharfedales and a Kelly press) were set up in the machine room; a stamp-coiling machine was added to the Stamp Printing Branch; and new in the Binding Branch were the latest case-making machine, a rounding and backing machine, and a cloth-cutting machine. "These machines should pay for themselves very quickly," Marks reported. A Radcliff quad-crown lithographic printing machine was a major improvement to the lithographic plant. Three railway ticket printing machines, made by Waterlow and Sons of London, were brand-new replacements for worn-out machines engaged on the endless job of printing railway tickets.<sup>3</sup> These machines were owned by the Railways Department.

<sup>1</sup>On the Public Service classification list for the Department of 1 April 1918 an unknown poet wrote:

We strive in the commercial race  
To catch the profiteer,  
But wind up in the same old place,  
Some furlongs in the rear.

<sup>2</sup>The thick paper wrappers in which the reams of printing paper arrived from overseas made useful overcoats on a wet night. The wearer would cut a hole in the end of the wrapper for his head and tie the sides round his waist.

<sup>3</sup>Nearly 10½ million tickets were printed in 1920-21, an average of almost a million a month.

With these acquisitions the wheel again turned full circle as the demand grew for accommodation to house the new machines. "It will, in the near future, be necessary to increase the accommodation so that more room may be obtained to enable the work to be done in the most efficient manner," Marks wrote in his 1921 report. "It is poor economy when work which requires skill and judgment has to be carried out where light is bad and room cramped." The new wing was "ideal"; but the time had come when the old part of the building should be improved to bring it more in keeping with up-to-date printing establishments, "where light, space, and air are considered such valuable aids to the achievement of the best work".<sup>1</sup>

Marcus Marks retired on 31 May 1922 after a career of almost 45 years in the Printing Office, broken only by a period of two years in Australia. As a copyholder the "incompetent Hebrew youngster"<sup>2</sup> may have begun his career inauspiciously; but at its end he had cause for pride in all he had accomplished. His charm and wit and gifts as a storyteller made him many friends: Cabinet Ministers, members of Parliament, departmental heads, and, above all, the men and women he worked with. In a valedictory message in his last annual report in 1922, written only a week or so before he retired, he expressed his appreciation of the loyalty and ready service given him by all his staff. "It has been an honour to be in control of a staff who have responded so well when called upon, and I especially wish to place this on record before terminating my official career," he wrote.<sup>3</sup>

### *George Skinner Becomes Government Printer*

George Skinner succeeded Marks as Government Printer on 1 June 1922. A "comp" by trade, fair and kindly, he was a less flamboyant personality than his predecessor, who largely because of his Jewish parentage had acquired the reputation of being "pretty tight". Skinner had not long been installed in the Government Printer's chair when a traveller called to sell some paper.

"How much have you got?" asked the Printer.

<sup>1</sup>This work was eventually done – in 1927 – by the Public Works Department. The windows of the old building were enlarged to improve the natural lighting in the composing rooms.

<sup>2</sup>See pp. 93–4.

<sup>3</sup>Marcus Marks died on 20 December 1951, aged 88. Service on the Wellington Fire Board (he was the Governor-General's appointee for some years) and on the council of the Wellington Free Ambulance occupied some of his time in retirement.



"Five hundred reams," replied the traveller.

"I don't really want it," said the Printer, "I have a large quantity of that paper. But I'll take the lot for fivepence-halfpenny per pound."

"I can't accept less than sixpence."

"Very well," said Mr Skinner, "I don't want it."

Reluctantly the traveller accepted the offer, folded his case, said "Good morning", and left the room. A few seconds later he poked his head round the half-opened door of the office.

"By the way," he asked, "when are you going back to Palestine?"<sup>1</sup>

Mr Skinner had the distinction of being the first Superintendent to be promoted Government Printer.<sup>2</sup> Gold-rimmed oval spectacles and a trimmed moustache gave him a disciplined, perhaps severe, appearance, but he was a genial man, held in high esteem by his staff. In his early years he was a keen trades unionist, for some years president of the Wellington Typographical Union and president also of the Wellington Trades Council. In this latter capacity he conducted, in 1900, the first linotype dispute heard by the Arbitration Court.

As a man who had spent his life in the trade, George Skinner had a wide knowledge of all branches of printing and of overseas developments in techniques. Wherever possible he applied this knowledge to the benefit of his Department, and his work as Government Printer won him wide esteem in the printing profession throughout New Zealand.

### *The Twenties*

The new Government Printer held office for 11 years – between depressions. The depression of 1921-22 called a halt to post-war expansion, and some of the staff were put on short time. The mid twenties were busy years, but they were followed closely by the retrenchment and unemployment which heralded the depression of the early thirties.

The drabness of these depression years is reflected in many of the Government Printer's annual reports. They are concise, factual, statistical. Members of the Printing Office staff each year earned the formal tribute: "I have pleasure in testifying to the whole-hearted services of those holding responsible positions, while the

<sup>1</sup>Marks, op. cit., p. 72.

<sup>2</sup>This excludes Didsbury, Joseph Wilson's overseer, who succeeded him after a few months.

staff generally has worked well." All but the first two of Mr Skinner's reports ended with this brief note of praise.<sup>1</sup>

There are plenty of columns of figures in these reports and they comprise an important record of some difficult years; but they do not make an interesting narrative. They record some sharp fluctuations. The printing of railway tickets declined from 9,447,000 in 1923-24 to 3,314,000 (these figures are rounded) in 1931-32 – few could afford to travel far in depression times. In 1923 the Printing Office took over responsibility for the purchase and sale of new typewriters to Government Departments: 140 machines were disposed of in the first six months, 329 in 1928-29, 52 in 1932-33.

Between depressions, some busy years were recorded in the twenties. The year 1925-26, with a turnover of £234,000 in the Department's trading account, was then the busiest in its history, the printing of telephone directories for the Post and Telegraph Department accounting for most of the increase. These directories, on a five-year contract, consumed at least 100 tons of paper each year; and a further 100 tons of material was used this year (1925-26) for census, electoral, and Publicity Office printing for the New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition at Dunedin. This extra work was undertaken without any increase in staff. Modern automatic machinery installed in the Letterpress Branch in 1924, principally a quad-royal machine with automatic feeder and extension delivery and a Wharfedale machine fitted with a pile suction feeder, enabled the work to be turned out much faster than under the old system of hand feeding, but even with these machines a great deal of overtime was necessary.

The two following years, judged solely on turnover, were busier still, but the burden was borne increasingly by machines rather than by men, and less overtime was worked. But 100 tons of paper, for example, take up a lot of room, and the finished products require further storage space before they are packed and dispatched to the Departments who ordered them. Lack of accommodation again became a cause for complaint in the Government Printer's annual reports; but it was 1932 before the old wooden store was demolished and a new building – of galvanised iron – erected.

Several schemes to extend the building were discussed in the early twenties, and in 1927 a special report was presented to the Government by two Cabinet Ministers, the Hons. R. A. Wright<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>This sentence was also taken over by Skinner's successor, George Loney, and used by him to conclude every report from 1933 to 1936.

<sup>2</sup>Mr Wright was a former compositor, printer of the *New Zealand Mail*, one of the founders of Wright and Carman Ltd., and Mayor of Wellington in the early 1920s.

and G. J. Anderson, the latter then Minister in Charge of the Department, urging the necessity for additional accommodation. Their report stressed the inadequacy of the present building and recommended that it be extended by the erection of an addition of three or five storeys. Nothing was done.

### *Daily Work Dockets Introduced*

Daily work dockets were introduced into the Printing Office on 1 April 1924. The men opposed them and took their problem to the Minister, the Hon. Mr Anderson, who received a deputation from the Government Printing Office Association on 24 March 1924. There was straight talking from all parties. The men's representatives claimed that the docket system was really a "clocking system", a back-door method of introducing piecework at time rates. The Minister and the Public Service Commissioner were equally frank; the work dockets were necessary to show the actual cost of the work done in the Printing Office. Why should the men not fill in dockets showing what they were doing?, the Minister asked rhetorically.

With some grumbling, then, the work dockets were accepted, and they remain in existence to the present day. Previously the costing of jobs had been done largely by the overseers, who relied on certain fixed rates for recurring jobs or made rough estimates of the cost of others. The main burden of operating the system now fell on the clerical staff. Even in 1924 new jobs were coming into the Printing Office at the rate of at least 80 a day, and long hours were worked to keep up to date the posting of daily dockets on to the cost sheets.

Other grievances were also aired by the deputation and the Minister promised to do his best to right them. But grievances are cumulative; they increase in force the longer they take to right. New causes are found for complaint. A stopwork meeting in 1926 was apparently concerned with the administration of the provisions of the Public Service Act of 1912 within the Department. The meeting received some mention in the House in July 1926 but was dismissed lightly by the Minister. "It was just one of the periodical disturbances that take place in printing-offices," said Mr Anderson, "and anybody who knows printers will not take serious notice of such incidents." Three years later, on 20 May 1929, a deputation from the Typographers' Chapel met the Minister in Charge of the Department, then the Hon. P. A. de la Perrelle, to express its dissatisfaction with the administration of the Public Service Act,



the Appeal Board system, classification, and with their working conditions. The Minister promised an early inspection of the Department.<sup>1</sup>

Poor working conditions make an unhappy staff. Two of the composing rooms in 1927 were lit by artificial light, which was reported by a questioner in the House to be "injuriously affecting the eyesight of about fifty skilled workers engaged in this Department". Mr Anderson assured his questioner that investigations were being carried out to improve the natural lighting of these rooms.<sup>2</sup>

### *Maps, Posters, Stationery*

One of the busiest branches in the twenties was the Photolitho and Process Engraving Branch, which continued to produce each year a considerable number of maps, plans, and other work, much of it for the Lands and Survey Department. To record a typical year: in 1926-27 the branch reproduced and printed six maps of New Zealand, seven county maps, 19 borough and town maps, 30 survey district maps, 90 sale plans and posters, and 744 miscellaneous maps, graphs, etc. Three maps of New Zealand were drawn during the year, as well as numerous graphs, posters, and colour stones. Four hundred large negatives, up to 30 in. by 30 in., were required for the maps and plans, and 1,750 negatives were made for process blocks. A large number of bromide prints and lantern slides were also produced by the branch during the year.

Some of the posters and display work done by this branch were required for the British Empire Exhibition held in London in 1924 and for the New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition at Dunedin from November 1925 to May 1926. These displays were designed to show the attractions, products, and potentialities of the Dominion, and some excellent booklets, folders, and other publicity material were produced by the Government Publicity Office and the Printing and Stationery Department, some of this work at very short notice. Another field in which the Photolitho Branch was kept busy was the printing of plans prepared by the Hydro-electrical Branch of the Public Works Department for power stations at Awapuni and Mangahao.

In 1924, also, the Printing and Stationery Department took over from a number of other Government Departments the sale of their publications. It was intended at the time that the Stationery Office

<sup>1</sup>*New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, Vols. 209 and 222.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. 212.

should handle the sale and dispatch of all Government publications: *Hansard*, the *Gazette*, the *School Journal*, the *Journal of Agriculture*,<sup>1</sup> to name a few. Lack of space to display them no doubt limited sales, and for some years the staff of the Stationery Office worked under the handicap of crowded quarters. In spite of those difficulties the Office's yearly turnover was frequently over £40,000. In 1929-30, to take an example, the Stationery Office dealt with 14,115 requisitions, the total sales amounting to £42,455. These requisitions comprised 126,742 items. They had to be recorded, assembled, packaged, addressed, dispatched; but, in addition to parcels, 2,875 cases of stationery were dispatched also. Cash orders numbered 6,509. Typewriters - 185 of them - to the value of £3,325 were also issued to Departments. Envelopes issued this year totalled 15,825,000. The Stationery Office could be a busy place indeed.

### *Depression Years*

But the boom was soon to end. The Department's turnover in 1929-30 was £249,000; by March 1932 it had dropped to £163,000. Machines without work required no men to tend them, and most of those dismissed could find employment only on relief work.<sup>2</sup> Wages were cut in the public service as early as May 1931. In June of that year the Government Printer reported that, apart from sessional work, the position seemed unlikely to improve for some time. And a year later: ". . . the present indications are that bed-rock has been reached". The year 1931-32 was in fact the worst year of the depression.

In such times the Government service is inevitably the target for suggested economies, no matter how unpracticable they may be. The Government Printing Office received its share of criticism.

In January 1932 the Auckland Chamber of Commerce urged a reduction of at least 25 per cent in Government administration costs as a measure to ensure financial stability. Three of its suggested economies were directed at the Printing Office: *Hansard* should be modified and less freely circulated; many returns appearing in the

<sup>1</sup>The *Journal of Agriculture* was printed and dispatched by the Government Printer up to June 1939, when the contract was let to a private firm. Difficulty in meeting publication dates on the fifteenth of each month was the chief reason for relinquishing the contract.

<sup>2</sup>The staff dropped from 507 in 1930 to 340 in 1932. Part-time work was also introduced to retain men in employment, even if it was only printing unemployment levy books or binding books and mounting photographs for the General Assembly and Alexander Turnbull libraries.

*Gazette* could be eliminated; substantial economies would probably accrue if Departments were allowed to obtain stationery and printing from other sources than the Printing Office.<sup>1</sup> These criticisms were disposed of vigorously in the correspondence columns of the *Evening Post* by an ex-employee of the Department, C. H. Chapman, former linotype operator and union secretary and president, and member of Parliament for a Wellington constituency for many years. The argument need not be continued here.

Recovery was slow. It was a period of make-do. Obsolete machines which had seen constant service for over a quarter of a century were nursed and patched up to last a few years longer.<sup>2</sup> Some of the folding machines in the Binding Branch, in particular, urgently needed to be replaced, but it was August 1933 and a new Government Printer was in office before the Department's annual report could record that two new machines had been installed. A typesetter and an index-cutting machine were also installed about the same time.

The new Government Printer was George H. Loney, who succeeded George Skinner on 1 June 1933.<sup>3</sup> Mr Loney had been Superintendent for 11 years – from June 1922. A “comp” by trade, he had a flair for the business side of Printing Office administration and is remembered by some as a “hard” businessman. His successor as Superintendent was Jack May, who had joined the staff in 1901 as an apprentice.

### *Recovery and Growth*

The years before the start of the Second World War in 1939 were growing years in which the Department recovered from the setbacks it had experienced during the depression. New machinery set new production records; profits soared; the staff virtually doubled in size, from 340 in 1932 to 630 in March 1939. By this date the Government Printer – E. V. Paul had succeeded Mr Loney in August 1937 – considered that the Department had approached its maximum productive capacity with the accommodation and facilities available. Its turnover for the year reached the record figure of £356,736, some £52,000 more than that for the previous year. The year's profit was £11,285.

<sup>1</sup>For the 1932 session, 7,225 *Hansards* were printed, but subscribers numbered only 126. The *Gazette* did better: 850 were printed of each issue, subscribers numbered 460, and the amount received from subscriptions and sales was £2,912.

<sup>2</sup>The old steam-heating system could not last and had to be replaced when it broke down some time in 1930. A new boilerhouse was also built.

<sup>3</sup>Mr Skinner died at Wellington on 17 February 1939.



Ernest Paul was an accountant, a public servant trained in the State Advances and Public Trust offices, and accountant in the Printing Office since 1927. All of his predecessors, from Christopher Fulton to George Loney, were tradesmen, craftsmen if you wish, who had learnt their craft as apprentice "comps" before graduating to the swivel chairs of management. The appointment of an accountant as Government Printer was recognition that the Printing and Stationery Department was now primarily a business concern, with a turnover each year of well over a quarter of a million pounds. Older "comps" and overseers might grumble at the change, but organising ability, a knowledge of finance and industrial legislation, and a flair for management were now primary qualifications for the post of Government Printer.<sup>1</sup>

The new Government Printer had an accountant's love for figures and in his annual reports he introduced tables to show at a glance the growth of his department. They are remarkably effective. A selection from them is reproduced below:

			1933-34	1938-39
Stereo plates cast	..	..	32,673	62,879
Rubber stamps made	..	..	1,000	18,712
Process blocks	..	..	1,378	4,475
Stationery requisitions	..	..	12,938	20,331
Typewriters supplied	..	..	121	1,248
Value of stationery and publications supplied			£35,425	£80,545

Mr Paul is remembered as an exceedingly hard worker in whose office the lights burned frequently until well after midnight. Organising ability, devotion to duty, and selflessness were features of his character, and he drove himself hard to maintain the high standards he expected always of his Department.

As Government activities expanded in the years following the election of a Labour government in 1935, greater demands were made on the services of the Printing Office. New Departments were established to administer the Government's State housing and welfare programmes, and some spectacular public works projects were begun. The general election of 1938, the Centennial Exhibition of 1939-40, and the operation of the Social Security Act of 1938 all required major printing work, much of it urgent.

<sup>1</sup>There was some discussion in the House over this appointment. The Minister in Charge of the Department, the Hon. P. C. Webb, considered that "a thoroughly trained business and administrative mind" was more important a qualification than "a detailed knowledge" of every branch of the Department. The new Government Printer "had a good business head and was an excellent administrator," he said. The heads of the various branches could give him the best technical advice. One member who disagreed with the Minister considered that "It was too often the case that the 'pen-pusher' shouldered aside the practical man." - *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 249, pp. 560-1.

New machinery was bought to cope with post-depression demands: a Camco-Rosback stitching machine was installed in 1933, a Miehle vertical job press and two intertypes in 1934, four machines in the Letterpress Branch, six in the Bookbinding Branch, and three in the Photolitho and Process Engraving Branch in 1936, and an offset press with an automatic feeder was added in 1938. There were other additions, too, but these are sufficient to indicate the pattern. Storage space for paper stocks was at a premium, and in 1934 the Public Works Department's store at Pipitea Point was taken over to relieve the congestion in the paper store.<sup>1</sup> The Stationery Office was so busy and its quarters so cramped that a night staff had to be appointed in 1938 when no more room could be found to house more staff during the day. But night work and overtime is a costly way to overcome space problems. A new building was urgently needed.

"A stage has now been reached where additional accommodation is an absolute necessity," Mr Loney had written in July 1936. "The staff is at present working under conditions which should not be permitted to continue, and steps should be taken immediately to provide adequate accommodation."

Plans for a new building were at last put in hand. Its site was the area at the rear of Army Headquarters and the Hotel Waterloo, bounded to the south by Whitmore Street and to the east by Waterloo Quay. Of reinforced concrete, the building was to comprise a basement and seven storeys. It was to be air conditioned, earthquake resistant, and as far as possible fireproof. It would take at least four years to complete.

Sheet-piling had already been driven on the site in readiness for the excavation of foundations when war broke out in September 1939. Work was stopped at once. In a sense, the new Government Printing Office was one of the first casualties of the Second World War.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Not a satisfactory arrangement as it involved costly double handling of heavy stock. Two portable elevators were bought in 1937-38 to handle these bulk-paper stocks. It was the Department's policy to carry nine months' supply of paper in stock and under order and 12 months' supply of stationery.

<sup>2</sup>The Government's plans for a new Printing Office were suspended, not abandoned. Mr Webb told the House on 25 July 1940 that, while the Government was anxious to avoid the erection of buildings which could be postponed, Cabinet was unanimous "that the sooner it pushed on with the new Printing Office building the better it would be for the workers in the Department and for everybody concerned". The present building was overcrowded and inconvenient, he said; he was "alarmed" at its condition and doubted whether it was strong enough to resist earthquake. - *N.Z.P.D.*, Vol. 257, p. 759.

## Chapter 10

### THE SECOND WORLD WAR, 1939-45

THE war did not catch the Department completely unprepared. Working in close cooperation with the Organisation for National Security, the Printing Office held in type, ready for publication in the *Gazette*, a number of emergency regulations which required only final authority from Cabinet to become effective. The War Book was ready and in operation by the beginning of September; proclamations by the Governor-General declared first a state of emergency and then on 4 September a state of war. Without this preparatory work the promptness with which the machinery of war was set in motion throughout New Zealand would not have been possible.

The war brought new problems. A shortage of overseas funds in the years before the war had prevented stocks of raw materials being built up in New Zealand before war came. It was the Government's policy to conserve those funds by limiting imports, and in the Printing Office supplies of paper and stationery were kept as low as possible. This policy of conservation and the demands of the pre-war years caught the Department with relatively low stocks of paper in September 1939. Orders placed at once in England took six months to fill instead of the usual three; but this was rapid service compared with the delays of 21 months, a common occurrence, and of even 28 months which orders placed later in the war were to face. From almost the first day of war, economies in the use of paper and stationery were necessary.

For the first three years of the war a departmental committee reviewed all printing orders, but when more drastic steps became necessary the Government Services Paper Conservation Committee was appointed in July 1942. It consisted of representatives of the Post and Telegraph, Railways, and Treasury Departments, and of the Public Service Commissioner's office. No paper could be issued to Departments without this Committee's authority, and then only if, in the Committee's view, its use was "demonstrably essential". From that date no jobs were printed by the Government Printer unless they were authorised by the Committee. A number of jobs which could not be handled by the Printing Office were placed with outside printers. In most cases the Printing Office supplied the paper.



Staff shortages are axiomatic in time of war. Men enlist, go overseas; others find jobs with higher pay; girls marry, raise families, join the services. At 4 September 1939 the Printing Office staff numbered 619, of whom 464 were males. There were 3,390 jobs on hand. At first the Department's policy was to offer no objection to any of its staff being granted leave for military service, as it was expected that the increased demands of the service Departments would be largely offset by a reduction in the work required by other Departments, and that more overtime could be worked if necessary. By 31 May 1940, 29 men had been released; by 25 November 1941, on which date New Zealand troops were fighting savagely in Libya at Belhamed and Sidi Rezegh, 75 men were absent with the armed forces – 15 of them were "comps" and 13 were machinists. Jobs on hand now totalled 3,602, and the Department had been declared an "essential industry". From May 1942 it became necessary for the Department to appeal against the calling up of essential key men.<sup>1</sup>

To take the war as a whole and to simplify the statistics: the staff fell from 630 in April 1939 to 504 in April 1946. The highest number absent on military service was 162 on 1 April 1943. But although the loss of skilled men was keenly felt, it was the branches which relied largely on manual work that were hit the worst. The Folding Branch was so short of girls that outside help had to be called on to cope with the work: girl training college students worked six or seven nights each month in the Binding Branch wrapping and dispatching the *School Journal*; WAACs on embarkation leave were called on on one occasion, and a number of married women "of mature years" were employed part time. Other Departments seconded girls from their staffs to fold and dispatch their own jobs. These makeshift arrangements with untrained staff were seldom satisfactory.

Other sections badly hit by staff shortages were the Stationery Office and the clerical section.<sup>2</sup> Overtime was worked practically continuously and outside help was called on in the evenings. A team of college boys worked in the clerical section during the

<sup>1</sup>These details are extracted from the departmental war history of the Government Printing and Stationery Department from 1939 to 1949, written by the Department's accountant, A. W. Gyles. It comprises 111 cyclostyled foolscap pages. According to this source, "productive staff" fell from 442 on 31 March 1939 to 296 on 31 March 1945. Productive staff included compositors, operators, casters, reading staff, stereotypers, letterpress machinists, bookbinders, folders, and litho and process engravers. By 31 March 1949 their numbers had risen only to 322.

<sup>2</sup>Of 23 clerical officers in the lower grades on the staff in 1941, 20 went into the military forces; the other three were medically unfit. Three were killed in the RNZAF. Of seven typists employed before the war, only two remained at one time; typists from other Departments helped out in the evenings.

school holidays to bring the posting of the stock ledgers up to date, but this inexperienced assistance required a great deal of training and supervision. The night staff in the Stationery Office was discontinued at the end of September 1940 after working for two years; the system was reintroduced from May to December 1941, but lack of staff caused the double shift to be abandoned. In the latter half of the war women were employed in the Stationery Office as checkers and packers.

The printing of ration books and petrol coupons provided two major wartime jobs, but a great deal of work was also done for the service Departments. They required training manuals, paybooks, textbooks, logbooks, war equipment tables, embarkation rolls, current affairs bulletins, targets, maps, and a host of other pamphlets and forms that fill the orderly rooms and headquarters offices of the military services at war. The Home Guard and the E.P.S.<sup>1</sup> and the National Service Department all required printing. One major job required at short notice by the United States Army was a large-scale training map of the Paekakariki area made from aerial photographs. The Americans expressed their appreciation of the quality of the finished maps and the speed with which they were completed.

With one or two exceptions, machinery replacements had to wait until after the war. The needs of the Photolitho Branch were more urgent than most, and in April 1943 it received a monster overhead precision camera, a Monotype-Huebner capable of producing a plate measuring 40 in. square. This camera, weighing  $4\frac{1}{4}$  tons, was ordered from the United States by the Army Department for the production of its maps, and at first was to have been operated by the Lands and Survey Department. The camera was bought without the knowledge of the Printing Office, but on its arrival in New Zealand it was quickly seized on by the Government Printer, who had the skilled engineers to erect it and the operators to work it. The Government authorised the takeover, the camera was installed, and it produced some fine examples of precision work.<sup>2</sup>

Another wartime acquisition took two years to arrive and was installed and ready for use only 13 days before the war ended. This was a Mann "Fast Three" quad-crown offset machine with automatic feed ordered in mid 1943 for the Photolitho Branch's map work. Had it arrived within the six-month period promised

<sup>1</sup>Emergency Precautions Scheme.

<sup>2</sup>To justify the term "monster" used above, it should be mentioned that the camera stood 11 ft high and occupied 24 ft by 15 ft of floor space. All its supports were set in concrete. Extreme accuracy in registration is required in the production of military maps.

by the manufacturer, the machine would have materially eased the work of the branch during the war.

What other wartime difficulties were there? Inferior paper that absorbed the ink and fluffed up when being machined; the experiments to find a suitable substitute for rubber in rubber stamps when supplies were cut off by the Japanese in Malaya; the "black-out" precautions which necessitated no fewer than 350 windows and skylights being made lightproof; the constant striving to effect economies in the use of paper and stationery, in envelopes and typewriter ribbons, in carbons, blotting paper, paper clips, and pins. Economies in paper and stationery alone resulted in an annual saving of approximately 400 tons of paper worth (in 1943 values) at least £30,000.

Jack May retired at the end of 1943 and was succeeded as Superintendent by James Wilson, who took over on 19 January 1944. Jimmy Wilson had joined the Department in 1905 and had served it well for many years as an operator, and later as overseer in the Jobbing Room. He was a kindly little man, harassed but unflappable. As Works Superintendent he occupied a small room on the first floor, sharing it with at least one typist, sometimes two. On a desk littered with papers two phones might be ringing at once. On either side of his chair two members of the staff poured forth their problems; three others, perhaps more, proofs in their hands, waited their turn on the far side of the desk. Inside the door, also clutching proofs, a few "outsiders" waited hopefully to catch his eye. This was certainly "working under pressure", as the annual reports sometimes described it.

Two memories of Jimmy Wilson remain after more than 20 years: of his good nature and his efficiency. A typographical problem would be banished with a few deft strokes with a pencil; the typist answering the phones might have difficulty making herself heard, but in all the hubbub Jimmy Wilson remained unperturbed.

### *Post-war Staff Shortages*

The Department's difficulties did not end with the coming of peace. In some ways they grew worse as the demands of Government Departments increased with the resumption of their peacetime activities. When manpower controls were lifted in the months following the war, staff were free to come and go; a number elected to leave the Department, 10 girls in the hard-pressed Folding Branch among them. Some of the men back from service overseas

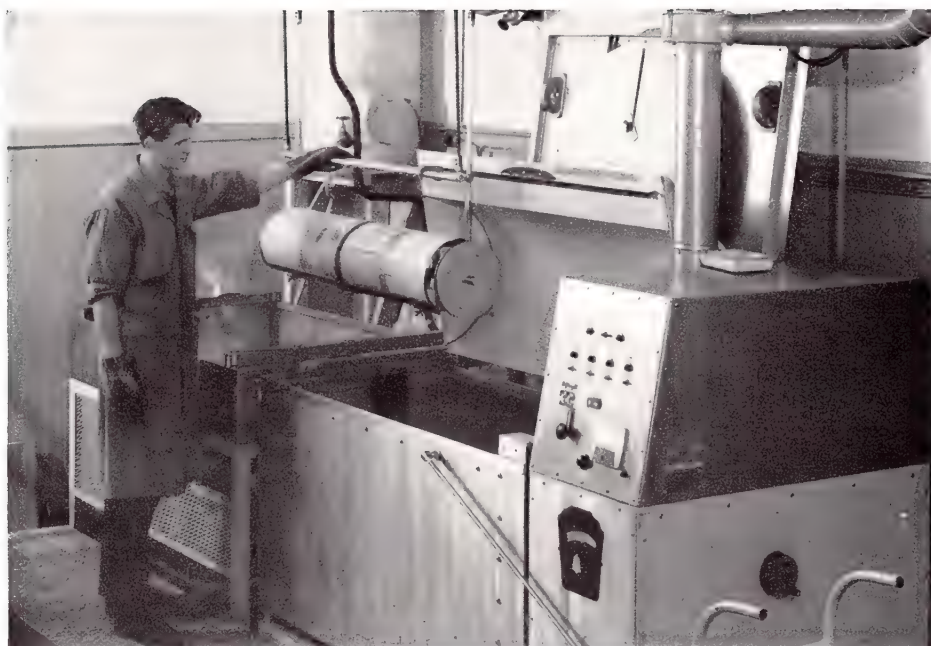




A section of the Letterpress Branch, Lambton Quay

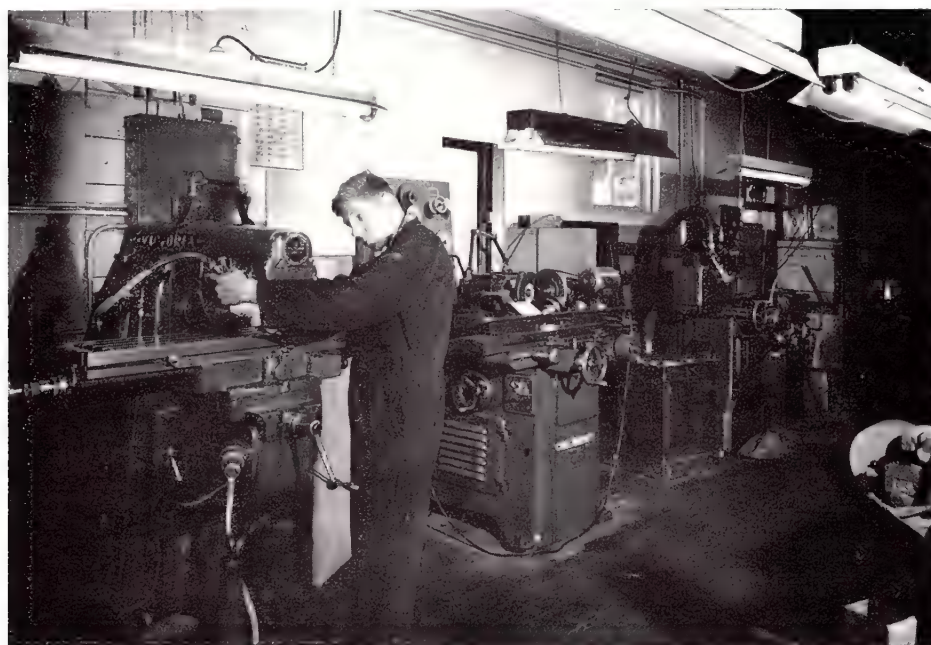
Bindery Branch, Lambton Quay





Powderless etching machine, Process Branch

A view of the Engineers' Workshop

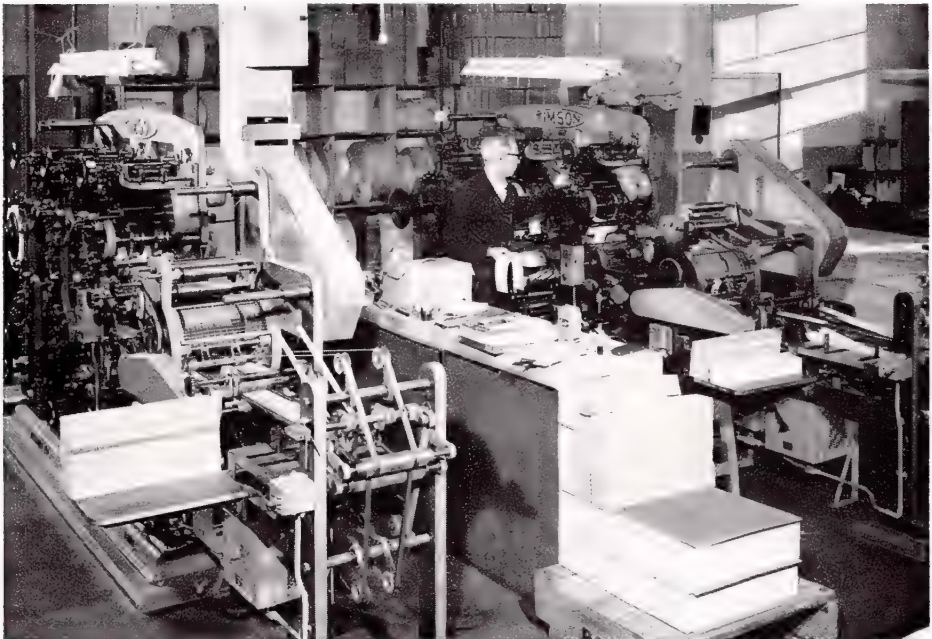






Walter Street Branch

Ticket-printing rotary machines at Walter Street

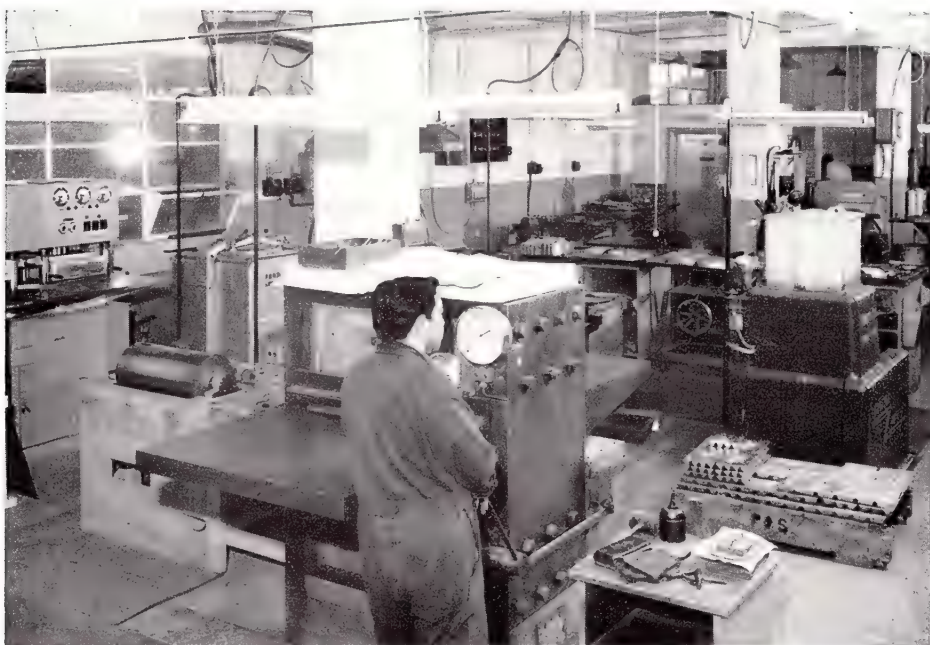


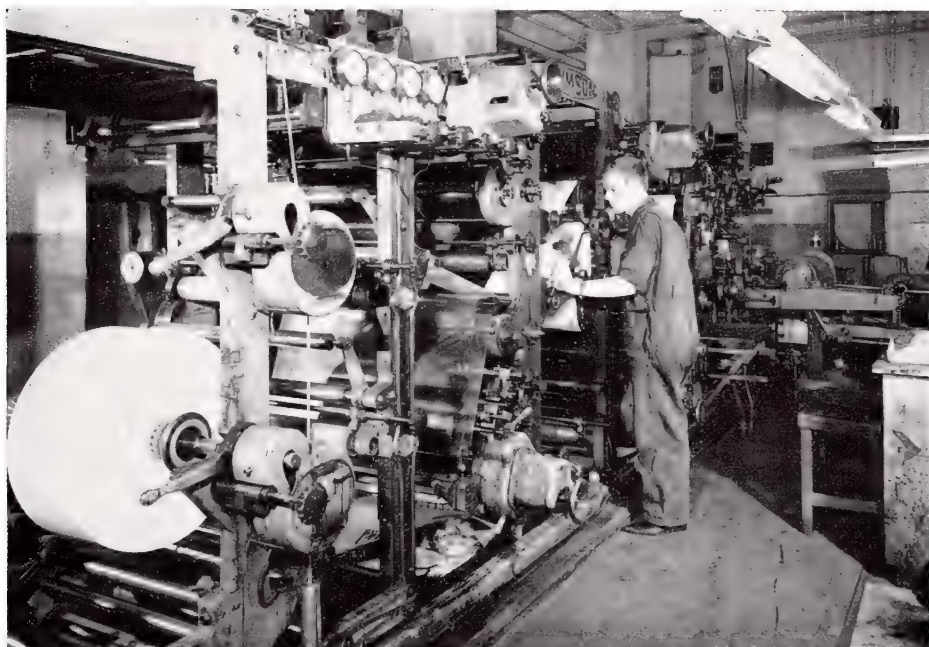




Senior composing apprentices' section, Walter Street

Stereo Room, Walter Street





Web-fed rotary letterpress machine, Walter Street. This machine can print three colours and four webs simultaneously

#### Douglas Street Branch

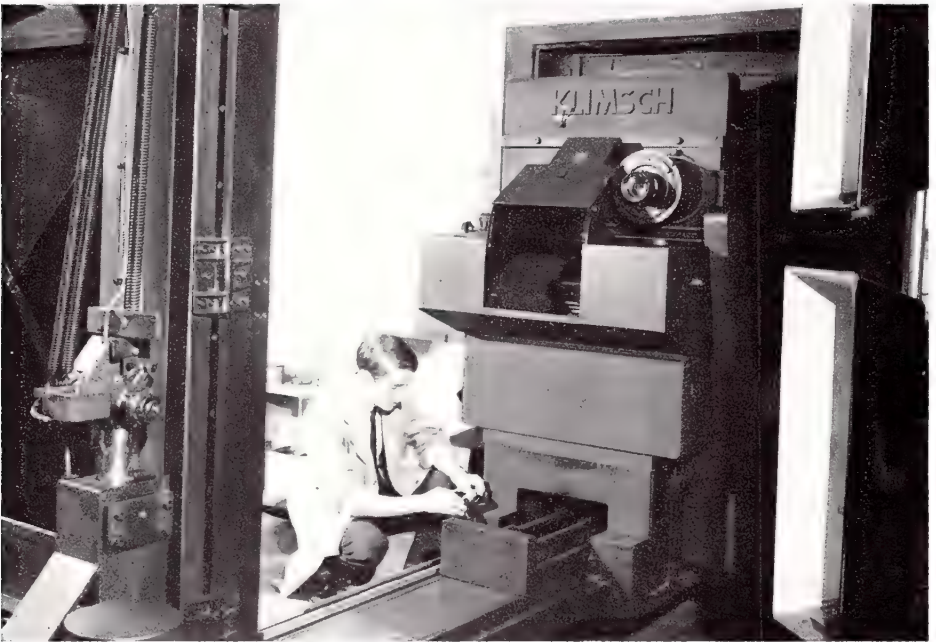






Assembling negatives for platemaking, Douglas Street

Klimsch camera, produces negatives up to a maximum size of 32 inches square

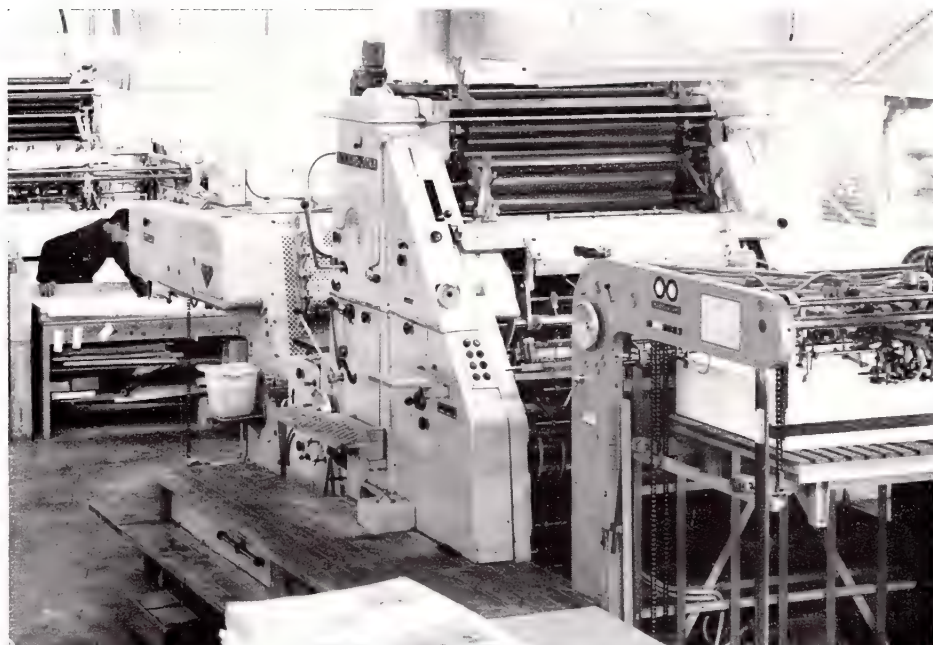


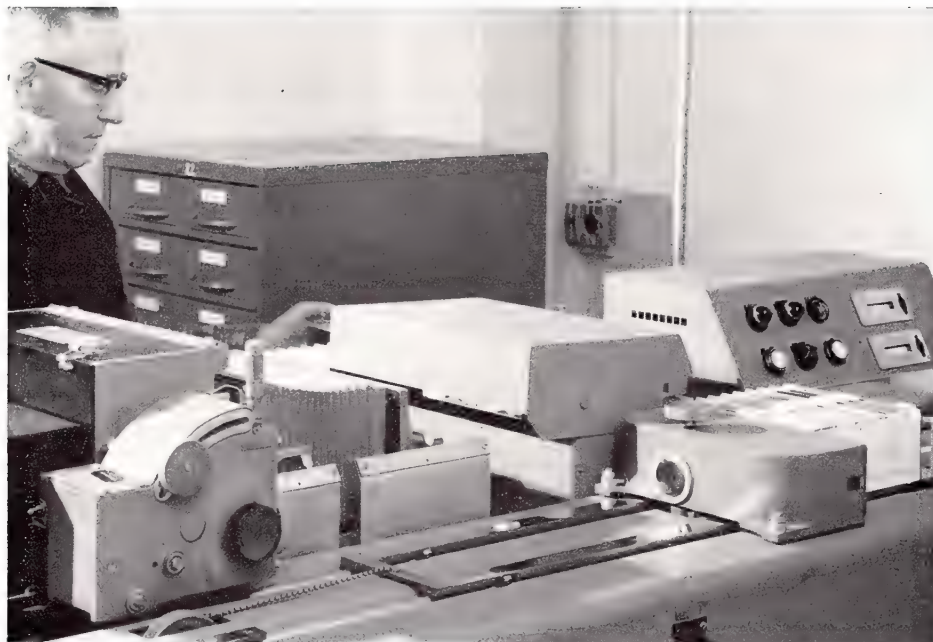




Platemaking Section

Two-colour offset machine





Photolist camera, Douglas Street. Used in the production of telephone directories, it photographs 7,200 listings an hour

#### Varitype Section, Douglas Street



could not settle down and took extensive leave of absence, during which they often tried other work to help them decide whether they should change their occupations. Some returned to their trade; others did not. Apprentices who had lost time through military service were now adults, often with the adult responsibilities of wife and family, but still only partly trained. The world-wide paper shortage which had eased towards the end of the war now became worse as the demand increased; many of the wartime economies had to be reimposed.<sup>1</sup>

The wartime expedient of employing schoolgirls in the Folding Branch during the term holidays was continued until 1948. Twenty girl pupils from the Wellington and Petone Technical Colleges were employed, some of them becoming quite proficient; but hopes that some of these girls would join the Department when they left school were not realised, only one girl doing so. Continuous efforts were made to recruit girls for this work; but in the end the Department had to employ casual unskilled men, brought from various parts of New Zealand by the Director of Employment and housed in Government camps in Wellington.

One of the reasons which made this male reinforcement urgent was an instruction from the Prime Minister to print an illustrated booklet on New Zealand's war record, the last two words making its title.<sup>2</sup> The booklet comprised 64 pages, plus a photograph of Peter McIntyre's wartime painting of Lieutenant-General Sir Bernard Freyberg, then New Zealand's Governor-General. No fewer than 428,670 copies were printed, a monster task for the Folding Branch even with a full staff. The answer, of course, was more modern labour-saving machinery, but it was some time before this could be installed.

Endeavours to recruit tradesmen were also unsuccessful. A year after the war ended, the staff was still 141 short, half of them female bindery assistants. Twenty-six "comps" and 22 letterpress machinists were still required. Attempts were made to find staff overseas, but in the first batch of assisted immigrants which arrived in August 1947 only one compositor and one machinist began work with the Department. In February 1948 twelve more tradesmen were allocated to the Department, and by January 1950 fifty-five assisted immigrants had joined the staff, 28 of them girls

<sup>1</sup>A Printing Priority Committee was set up in October 1946 to examine all printing orders, determine which jobs were essential, and allocate priorities. It was disbanded on 1 August 1949.

<sup>2</sup>The booklet was prepared, in Mr Fraser's words, "because all the people of New Zealand who have worked and fought so hard have a right to know the record of their achievement".



for the Folding Branch. Their contracts bound them to remain for two years in the positions to which they were appointed, although they could change jobs with the consent of the Department of Labour and Employment. On 31 March 1950 there were still 120 vacancies in the Department for skilled tradesmen and female factory workers; 14 apprentices were also required.

In these post-war years there was some dissatisfaction about rates of pay. Wages in the Government service were stabilised, but frequently a man could earn a higher rate in his trade outside the service. Repeated representations made to the Public Service Commission failed to achieve any improvement, and eventually a stop-work meeting was called on the afternoon of 21 January 1948 to consider further action. The Government Printer, Mr Paul, issued instructions that the meeting was not to be held; but failure to achieve any easing of their grievances by constitutional methods had left many members of the Printing Office staff with "a deep sense of frustration".<sup>1</sup> A brief meeting was held and a deputation sent to the Prime Minister, who agreed to set up a Margins and Anomalies Committee to consider the claims of the Government Printing Office and other groups of workers. As a result of the Committee's investigations tradesmen received an increase of £25 a year, but most other employees had to wait a further 18 months before they were given increases.<sup>2</sup> Inevitably staff were lost and recruitment hampered during this period.<sup>3</sup>

The demands of these wartime and post-war years took their toll, and Mr Paul died in harness on 31 March 1949 after a brief illness. He had been Government Printer for 12 years. A tribute to his work was paid by the Prime Minister, the Right Hon. Peter Fraser:

"The passing of Mr Paul has been a deep shock to me as I know it will have been also to all those with whom he was associated. His devotion to duty, his outstanding organising ability, his faithfulness to the highest traditions of the service he so ably led, and his admirable personal qualities of selflessness and thought for others made notable his period as Government Printer. . . .

"On many occasions I have taken the opportunity to congratulate Mr Paul, and the men and women under him, on the outstanding service given to the Government in keeping pace

<sup>1</sup>Gyles, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>2</sup>Backdated to 1 July 1948.

<sup>3</sup>Their numbers fell to 482 at 1 April 1949. Losses through retirement, marriage, and resignations more than offset the gains from the immigration scheme and local sources.

with the heavy demands made during Parliamentary sessions," said Mr Fraser, "... During his term of office, the best traditions of high-class printing were maintained."

A tribute from the Minister in Charge of the Printing Office, the Hon. E. T. Tirikatene, concluded: "Another totara has been set aside by the hand of A Itua".

### *Mr Owen Becomes Government Printer*

Mr Paul was succeeded by Roy Owen, the present Government Printer.<sup>1</sup> Aged only 43, he came to the Printing Office after seven years as editor of the *New Zealand Journal of Agriculture*. He brought to his new appointment the drive and vigour and administrative skill that suited so aptly the requirements of the Printing Office in this post-war period of reorganisation and growth. He made changes; he introduced new blood; he introduced new methods and new machines. Foremost in his mind were the needs of his Department. On taking over command in June 1949 he conducted an intensive examination of the Department's plant and production methods. He found that much of the machinery was obsolete and that many operations for which machines existed were still being performed by hand. Some changes were obviously needed.

One of these changes was the upgrading of the position of Superintendent to that of Works Manager. It was a change in more than name. In accordance with modern printing practice, the Works Manager managed the printing works, leaving the Government Printer free to formulate policy and direct operations. The Works Manager apportioned work to the various branches, coordinated their activities, watched delivery dates.

The first man to fill the new position was Wiri Baker, appointed on 10 June 1949. He had already served 41 years in the Printing Office as apprentice (1908-14), "comp", and overseer, and was then aged 56.<sup>2</sup> Experienced, bustling, and energetic, he imparted the drive that Owen expected and the times demanded. Some of the turmoil that had eddied round Jimmy Wilson's desk for five busy years was removed from Baker's office by the establishment in August 1949 of a separate Production Section to control the flow of work through the Printing Office. This section dealt with

<sup>1</sup>James Wilson acted as Government Printer from April to June 1949, pending Mr Owen's appointment.

<sup>2</sup>Mr Baker served under six Government Printers, and for a few months in 1952 while Mr Owen was overseas he was himself Acting Government Printer. He began his career in the Department as a message boy.

the "customer" – for want of a better word. It received the "copy", estimated costs, fixed priorities, allocated materials, handled the customer's inquiries, and followed the progress of a job through to completion and delivery. Schedugraph boards brought up to date each day recorded the progress of work through the various stages of production.

Only about half the work received could be handled by the Printing Office,<sup>1</sup> and it was the Production Section's responsibility to obtain quotations from outside firms, allocate contracts, and watch the progress of a job until it was completed. Commercial printers from Whangarei to Invercargill have done work at various times for the Printing Office, which in many cases supplies the paper for the job. The Production Section is under the direct supervision of the Assistant Works Manager.<sup>2</sup>

The introduction of compulsory military training in 1949 increased the demands for printing from the service Departments, and it became necessary to place more and more work with outside printers. An assistant computer (A. R. Shearer) was appointed Production Officer, with a staff of skilled tradesmen to handle the technical work. Jobs on hand increased steadily from 3,575 on 1 August 1949 to 4,770 on 1 April 1950. No fewer than 15,708 jobs were completed in 1950, an average rate of approximately 300 a week. This work entailed the processing of nearly 8 tons of paper each day.

As a result of Mr Owen's review of the plant, the Works Manager and the Chief Engineer (Mr R. M. Heyward<sup>3</sup>) were sent to England early in 1950 to investigate modern printing machinery and production methods. They spent nine weeks in England and a few days in Copenhagen; on their return they recommended an extensive programme of plant replacement. Rotary printing was recommended for most of the Department's larger jobs, both letterpress and offset, and some major additions to the binding machinery to eliminate some of the hand work were also proposed.

The ideal, of course, would have been to install these machines in a new building, but for some years after the war housing rightly received priority over the erection of Government buildings. The two-man mission to England in 1950 investigated the layout of

<sup>1</sup>In 1950 barely 50 per cent of the Government work was being done by the Department.

<sup>2</sup>Archie Shearer filled this position from 1951 to 1953 and was succeeded by Leo McGann, formerly Production Officer.

<sup>3</sup>Mr Heyward was later promoted to the position of Planning Engineer, with the primary task of planning the layout and construction of new premises. Scale-model layouts of these premises were constructed under his direction, and they proved invaluable in the planning and synchronisation of production. He retired in February 1955.



modern factories and printing works to ensure that the latest ideas in this field of industrial planning were incorporated in the new building. In the event, the decision not to proceed with the eight-storey building on Waterloo Quay was wise. Methods and machines have changed considerably in the years since this building was designed, and the new building in Mulgrave Street incorporates many of these advances.

Another innovation at this time was a staff newsletter. *Print* began modestly in October 1949 as an eight-page newsletter and rapidly attained distinction with a two-colour cover and 24 pages of text, illustrated with line blocks and half-tone photographs. The booklet was edited by the Department's Personnel Officer (Mr N. Brazendale) and, in addition to personal notes and contributed items, contained articles on new machinery and on technical developments in the printing trade. Publication was suspended in December 1950 because of the need to conserve paper; but in August 1952, rechristened *GP Print*, the newsletter reappeared as the "official organ" of the Department. An attractive cover designed by the Department's senior artist, John Morrison, and the inclusion of coloured inset cards on various technical subjects established the journal far above the usual range of house publications. Its demise must have been regretted.

## *Chapter 11*

### ACCOMMODATION AND STAFF PROBLEMS

LACK of space as well as lack of staff was the chief handicap of the Stationery Office in the post-war years. Stationery awaiting dispatch was generally assembled on the floor of the packing room and checked against requisitions before being packed in cases or parcels. When 20,000 requisitions, consisting of 220,700 items, are handled a year, as was done in the year ending 31 March 1949, floor space is at a premium. The best answer is a night staff, so that the same floor area can be used over and over again in the 24 hours; but men willing to work night shifts are not easy to find. After "a great deal of persuasion", six members of the staff worked a night shift for a few weeks in August and September 1947 and successfully caught up with some of the arrears, but they were not willing to continue any longer.<sup>1</sup>

The Stationery Office staff in March 1949 numbered 32; it was never sufficient to cope with the orders on hand. At one stage the position was so desperate that even ships' deserters were accepted for work in the packing room. Branch stationery offices were opened in Auckland in August 1950 and a year later in Christchurch in the hope that decentralisation would relieve the congestion in Wellington, but suitable accommodation was difficult to find in these cities too. In November 1949 the Stationery Office was shifted to the ground floor of the Thorndon Quay paper store which had been used for some years by the Army stationery office.<sup>2</sup> The new quarters provided relief but were still not adequate. Departmental forms and publications were still dispatched from the main building in Lambton Quay.

Another store was obtained in Aotea Quay. Some time was spent fitting it out, and the complete Stationery Office moved there in 1951. With more room at last, and with larger supplies available,

<sup>1</sup>One objection to the employment of a night staff was that no work was left for the day-staff checkers and packers to do for the first hour or so in the mornings. A change in starting times corrected this.

<sup>2</sup>During the war five members of the Department's staff were lent to the Army Department to reorganise and help staff this stationery office. Only two of these returned to the Department.

the Department could now order more generously and carry larger reserves than it had been able to do in the past. The establishment of the branch offices in Auckland and Christchurch also allowed orders for locally manufactured goods to be spread wider.<sup>1</sup> Orders for Departments outside Wellington were speeded up and transport costs saved. The days of chronic shortages and erratic deliveries seemed to have come to an end.

This prediction did not apply to paper, which for some years after the war was difficult to obtain and expensive in price. To conserve dollars, the Department was forced to buy from "soft-currency" sources. On the Continent and in Norway and Sweden, forests and stockpiles of timber were destroyed by war or used for fuel.<sup>2</sup> Little transport was available to haul the timber to the mills, some of which were forced to close down. To build up their own dollar credits, some European countries preferred to sell their pulp and paper to the United States rather than to Great Britain.

With supplies precarious, some manufacturers and merchants were reluctant to accept orders for paper and binding materials. Prices rose alarmingly. A ton of one of the principal lines of paper used by the Department cost £29 in 1939, £130 in 1948. In 1949 it dropped to £66 a ton but by 1950 had risen again to £93. Fortunately for the Department, the Government Printer's decision in the latter part of 1949 to increase his reserve stocks, although it sorely taxed the storage accommodation, enabled the Printing Office to maintain production. The position deteriorated still further at the end of 1950, and the Government re-established the Paper Conservation Committee, with Mr Owen as its chairman, to apply economies. These restrictions on the use of paper, stationery, and envelopes were not relaxed until supplies improved in 1952.

### *Decentralisation*

Of a total area of 175,000 sq. ft. occupied by the Department in March 1950, only 77,000 sq. ft. was situated in the main building on Lambton Quay. This was decentralisation with a vengeance; but it was a costly makeshift. The old building had long outlived its usefulness. Over the years it had been extended from time to time to cope with the expansion of the Department; but the point had now been reached, to quote Mr Owen's report for the year 1949-50, "where any further expansion either horizontally or

<sup>1</sup>The Auckland stationery office is now located in Grahame Street and the Christchurch office in Peterborough Street.

<sup>2</sup>With coal difficult to obtain, even pulp mills were forced to burn wood in vast quantities, thereby robbing themselves of their own raw material.



vertically is impossible. . . . In consequence of this piecemeal erection the layout and design of the building are far from satisfactory for modern industrial needs, and working conditions, judged by present-day standards, can only be regarded as poor."

The Department's tradesmen<sup>1</sup> were kept busy with saw and hammer and paint brush; fluorescent lighting was installed and a modern heating and ventilating plant set up in the Letterpress Branch; a cafeteria blossomed on the top floor – it was opened in March 1949. But these were all adornments and accessories; they improved working conditions but seldom did they improve the flow of work. Space was still congested. A forest of partitions, pillars, and narrow passages left little room for new machines, some of them so large and heavy that only certain parts of the building were strong enough to accommodate them. Branches grew in size until their numbers forced them to find accommodation away from the parent building. The Stationery Branch, as was noted earlier, moved first to Thorndon and then to Aotea Quay; the Lithographic Branch took Stationery's place on Thorndon Quay; part of the clerical staff occupied the Government Buildings annexe across the road, and others spread further afield to the old Casualty Clearing Hospital in Aotea Quay; part of the Binding Branch occupied premises at Miramar. In 1952 the Process Block-making Section moved down the road to rented premises in Thorndon Quay; in 1953 the Waste Paper Depot took over the ground floor of this building. A number of other moves – too many to record in detail – followed as the years passed.

Money had also to be spent on the old building – after all, the greater part of it *was* built in 1886–88. Most expensive were major repairs to the roof (£8,000 according to the Government Printer's estimate) and the replacement of a 40-year-old lift whose breakdown would have meant the complete disruption of all production in the Department.<sup>2</sup> Eventually this lift was condemned and a contract let for its replacement; but in the meantime an auxiliary lift (serving only three floors) had to be installed while the main lift shaft was rebuilt. The old spiral iron stairway was removed to make way for this auxiliary  $\frac{1}{2}$ -ton lift, which was completed by December 1954. The main goods lift, with a capacity of 2 tons, was completed in 1956. The two lifts cost approximately £12,500.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Printing Office built up its own permanent maintenance staff of carpenters, electricians, a plumber, and a painter. There was always plenty of work for them.

<sup>2</sup>Bulky rolls of paper weighing up to half a ton and heavy metal formes cannot be carried up narrow stairs. A 16-octavo-page forme of type weighs over half a hundredweight.

<sup>3</sup>A small lift to serve two floors of the Stamp Printing Branch was also installed in 1955–56.

The roofing job also took longer to complete than planned, partly because of the reluctance of contractors to undertake repairs to the old part of the building. Leaks caused some damage to plant and spoiled some work in progress; buckets were used on the upper floors to catch the worst of the drops when it rained. The repairs were completed in 1954-55.

A disturbing trend in the early 1950s was the number of printing tradesmen who left their trades to take up employment as unskilled labourers. Some found work in factories, lured by high wages and even higher rewards on overtime. Commercial printers, short of men, offered higher wages than those paid by the Department; a number of men were tempted. At 1 April 1950 the staff numbered 518, which was 225 short of the Department's establishment of 743. For some years there was a shortage of skilled tradesmen in all branches.

In spite of these shortages production increased. Modern high-production machines were replacing men, and jobs were being produced faster and more economically than ever before. The 1952 session of Parliament was particularly busy. In addition to *Hansard* and the usual reports, more than a hundred Bills, two of mammoth proportions, were produced (in Mr Owen's words) "with a degree of promptitude which would have been difficult if not impossible to attain without the aid of the new and improved plant."

### *The Development of Photo-offset Printing*

Some of the credit for this faster rate of production must be given to the photo-offset camera and to the staff of the Photo-offset Branch. If the invention of the linotype revolutionised the printing trade at the turn of the century, the introduction of the camera had almost as great an effect in the next 50 years. Primarily used for the production of maps, charts, and posters, offset lithography quickly extended its usefulness to the field of letterpress. For some jobs it has replaced the letterpress machines. Simplicity of operation and speed in production are two of its greatest merits.

One of the pioneers of photo-offset reproduction in New Zealand was a member of the staff of the Government Printing Office, Mr F. W. Sears of the Lithographic Branch. Mr Sears set up an experimental plant at his home and spent his spare time developing an improved method of lithography using photographic exposures. At first he called his process the High Light Process, but after later improvements in America he gave it the name *Alizigraphy*,

or lithography of the future. A Chicago inventor, I. W. Rubel, invented a machine to operate Sears's process, and the two went into partnership. It was a rotary machine, in which the image was transferred from zinc plates on to a rubber blanket. In an article in *Penrose Annual* for 1908-9 Sears predicted that the lithographer's day was coming and that "the offset litho press is the sun in the dawn of that day".

Offset printing was introduced to New Zealand printing houses by Wilson and Horton Ltd., Auckland, in 1914. The image from the printing plate was "offset" on to a rubber blanket and thence on to the paper. Nowadays, a thin sheet of zinc or aluminium provides the printing surface.

The camera's usefulness in printing was widely recognised during the Second World War, and great advances were made in Europe and in the United States in the development of offset lithography. The Government Printer was quick to introduce these improvements into his Department but encountered the major handicap of a shortage of skilled offset lithographers. Efforts were made by the Department to recruit suitable men in the United Kingdom, but this recruiting met with little success; nor could the Department offer rewards sufficiently high to attract skilled men from private employment. In an attempt to overcome the difficulty the Department engaged the services of a skilled operator (who had arrived from England) to conduct a series of classes. These proved of great benefit to the Printing Office tradesmen.

In 1950 the Photolitho and Process Engraving Branch was extended to meet the requirements of the Lands and Survey Department and the Armed Services Mapping Committee, principally for mapping work. Additional cameras were bought and offset presses of various sizes, together with subsidiary plant, installed in the old Stationery Store in Thorndon Quay.<sup>1</sup> This equipment was also available for letterpress work. A new service undertaken by this branch about 1948 was the preparation of multex plates for use on multilith and similar machines operated by other Departments.

The photo-offset plant was transferred completely to Thorndon early in 1951. Most of these machines were less than a year old, and the others less than 10 years old, giving the Department one of the largest, most modern, and best equipped offset plants in the Dominion. The Offset Branch, as it was renamed, was separated from the Process and Photo-engraving Branch, and although the

<sup>1</sup>A Crabtree two-colour offset machine and an R.30 Rotaprint machine were important early accessions in 1950.



divorce caused some difficulties in operation it was the only way that both branches could be extended. The Rotaprint-Multilith machine unit, transferred to Aotea Quay in 1951-52, continued to increase its output. In two years the number of plates it processed and printed increased nearly tenfold from 440 in 1949-50 to 4,024 in 1951-52. This section's work on short-run jobs relieved a great deal of the pressure on the Letterpress Branch.

### *Expansion in the Hutt Valley*

With storage accommodation in Wellington at a premium, bulk paper stores were established in the Hutt Valley, first at Gracefield and then later at Seaview, where three former United States Joint Purchasing Board stores were taken over. This site was too far away from the printing works to be ideal, and time was lost and extra costs involved in transporting the paper from the wharf to Seaview, and then back to Wellington when the paper was required. To give some idea of the amount of material handled, 158,254 packages of paper weighing 1,738 tons were issued for printing during the year 1949-50. Over a million and three-quarter envelopes were issued for printing during this year, and 34,666,400 were supplied to Departments through the Stationery and Issuing Offices.

In 1952 a new factory was taken over at Petone for the production of pamphlets, brochures, and various other publications. It was planned as a complete model printing unit, self contained, fully equipped with modern plant, and with ideal working conditions for its staff. It commenced operations in October and was an immediate success. Its workrooms provided a striking contrast to those in the old building, where the plant was now concentrated on the printing of departmental forms and on parliamentary work.

Many of the Printing Office staff lived in the Hutt Valley, and the establishment of branches there caused little inconvenience. In fact, at this stage it appeared that the new Printing Office might be built in the valley. On 10 December 1951 Cabinet approved the erection of a new building on a 10-acre site at Seaview. A start was made with the plans, and in 1952 the Government Printer and a Ministry of Works architect visited the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States to inspect new printing plants. As a result of this visit the original plans were revised. They were approved by Cabinet on 18 November 1953, but the preparation of final drawings and specifications made "disappointingly slow" progress - to borrow the Government Printer's own words - and

in 1955 Cabinet decided to abandon the project.<sup>1</sup> It decided instead on a scheme of further decentralisation in which the Department would be divided into several self-contained and independent units, each of which would handle its own work through to completion.

*Paper: Feast Follows Famine*

But this is leaping ahead. The 1951 waterfront strike, paper shortages, and rising costs were the main problems of the early fifties. In early 1952 paper reached the peak price of £230 a ton. In spite of the economies of the Paper Conservation Committee, the stocks built up by the Printing Office declined rapidly and for several months in mid 1951 "extreme difficulty" was experienced in meeting Departments' requirements. This was one of the most difficult years in the Department's history. Then suddenly famine turned to feast as manufacturers caught up with arrears and huge orders began to arrive ahead of schedule. For the Government Printer it was an embarrassment of riches. Those orders which could be cancelled were cancelled,<sup>2</sup> but makers already manufacturing paper to meet these orders sometimes refused to accept cancellation. As it happened, many mills in the United Kingdom were forced to shut down machines or to operate reduced hours.

One of the casualties of the paper conservation drive was *Hansard*. For the first session of the House in 1951, 3,800 copies were printed; for the second session this number was reduced to 1,850. Subscribers at that date numbered only 158 and the amount received from sales and subscriptions was a mere £120. The *Gazette*, on the other hand, with 646 subscribers, earned £3,496 for the year 1951-52.

During the previous year 12 additional intertype machines were installed to replace some of the old monotypes, obsolete machines with much hard service to their credit but subject in their dotage years to frequent breakdowns. This major replacement marked a change in policy as previously most of the Department's typesetting had been done on monotype machines. Like the linotype, the intertype cast a line of type (hence the early name) in a solid "slug". Most of the operators, men traditionally hard to please, were more than satisfied with the change.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Some local authorities had raised objections to the proposed site at Seaview.

<sup>2</sup>Orders for over 1,900 tons were cancelled.

<sup>3</sup>The intertype was not a new machine. Six of them were in use in Wellington as early as 1917.

Wiri Baker retired in March 1953 and Archie Shearer was appointed Works Manager from 1 April. The new Works Manager had joined the Department as a compositor in November 1936 and had risen rapidly via the route of Assistant Computer (1946), Production Officer (February 1950), and Assistant Works Manager (1951). Sound practical knowledge was complemented by a flair for administration, and these qualities received further recognition in April 1956 with his appointment as Deputy Government Printer and Works Manager. When these appointments were separated in April 1966, he became Deputy Government Printer.

### *The Royal Tour, 1953-54*

The Department's turnover for the year just ended (1952-53) created a new record. Reaching the figure of £1,194,350, it exceeded the £1 million mark for the first time in the Printing Office's history. It was to be followed by years that were even busier. The royal tour which began with the Queen's arrival at Auckland on 23 December 1953 required a huge volume of printing, some of it for the personal use of the Queen and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh. Naturally, the highest standards of printing craftsmanship were demanded for the occasion and some beautiful work was produced.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, every order was delivered on time. A number of letters of appreciation of the work done by the Printing Office were received after the tour ended, the chief of these coming from the Governor-General, Sir Willoughby Norrie, and the Prime Minister, the Right Hon. S. G. Holland.

Most of this work, of course, had to be done before the tour started. The itinerary for the tour was produced as a book of 176 pages, lavishly illustrated with photographs and with 90 five-colour maps showing the day-by-day route to be taken by the royal party. The crests of all the major cities and towns of New Zealand were printed in colour to form the end papers of the book, which was given the title *New Zealand Journey*. Three thousand five hundred copies were printed, a few of them specially bound and embossed for the use of Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh. The work was done in remarkably short time in collaboration with the Tourist and Publicity Department, and with assistance from process-engraving firms in Auckland and Wellington.

<sup>1</sup>The credit for this work must go to the Government Printer and to the craftsmen who produced it. A major part in it was taken by the typographer, Fred Davey, whose knowledge of type and flair for layout give him few rivals in New Zealand. Some of this printing was later included in exhibitions of the Department's work held in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch.



A member of the Department's staff won personal distinction in a tragedy which will always be associated with the start of the royal tour. John Holman, a compositor in the Gazette Room, was awarded the George Medal for gallantry at the scene of the railway disaster at Tangiwai on Christmas Eve 1953. The carriage in which Holman and his wife were travelling to Auckland plunged into the swollen Wangaehu River. While Mrs Holman held a torch, Holman and another man, standing up to their necks in water, passed the other passengers in the carriage out to safety. Through their efforts only one life was lost in this carriage. Two other members of the staff were not so fortunate. Arthur Wale (Stores) and Ron Morgan (Accounts), both extremely popular men in the Department, lost their lives in this disaster.

### *The Busy Fifties*

The royal tour demands came at the end of a heavy parliamentary session when the Department was inundated with work. Other major jobs in the same year were telephone directories, of which 17, totalling almost half a million copies, were printed in 1953-54. They ranged in size from the Auckland directory of 320 pages, 98,000 copies, to the 30-page Taumarunui directory requiring just under 4,000 copies.<sup>1</sup> Exceptionally long hours of overtime were worked during the year.

Overtime, of course, increases production costs, which in the mid fifties rose steadily. Wage increases (there were two in 1953), the increased costs of paper, ink, binding cloths, and other materials, the rising cost of fuel and power, all were reflected in higher charges for the finished job. The Government Printer constantly urged the need for economy in Departments' printing requirements.

Although Public Service salary scales improved, tradesmen were still hard to find. The inducements of security and superannuation in the Public Service were nullified by its fixed maximum scales, and for some years the Department was gravely short of first-class tradesmen. In this period of over-employment the Printing Office found it difficult to compete with other industries. Tradesmen recruited overseas were often content to complete their two years' contract and then move on, frequently to better salaries in private employment. The staff at 31 March 1954 numbered 610, the highest

<sup>1</sup>Between 1950 and 1955 the total number of telephone directories printed increased by 42 per cent. The number of pages in these directories increased also - by 19 per cent.

for some 15 years, but there were too few skilled tradesmen among them, especially in the Composing, Letterpress, and Offset Branches.

In July 1953 the Plan Printing Branch of the Ministry of Works was transferred to the Department. This transfer was part of a policy of centralising services for all Government Departments. Already central duplicating services were operating in Auckland and Christchurch, run by the Printing and Stationery Department's branch stationery offices. These duplicating services were an outstanding success. Fewer machines pooled in one central office could handle a greater volume of work than machines scattered throughout various Departments, and the skills of well trained operators were soon apparent in the quality of the work they produced. The service, provided free to Departments, was widely appreciated.<sup>1</sup> In Wellington a central addressograph service was established in April 1954, when Treasury's addressograph section of the Superannuation Division was amalgamated with the Printing Office's own section. Later in the year the service was extended to include duplicating work.<sup>2</sup> In 1957 a second Wellington duplicating service was opened in Courtenay Place; other branches were established later in the Departmental Building in Stout Street and in the Bowen State Building in Bowen Street.<sup>3</sup>

New equipment helped the Plan Printing Section to increase its production and expand its activities. A new ammonia-process plan-printing machine and a "photofile" camera were installed. The latter could copy plans and drawings measuring up to 40 in. by 30 in. and record them on film 6½ in. by 4¾ in. from which enlargements up to the original size could be produced. These enlargements, especially those made from negatives of pencil drawings, were often an improvement on the original. The reduction in size greatly facilitated the storage of plans.

A major job undertaken by the Department in 1954-55 was the printing of over 300,000 copies of the *Report of the Special Committee on Moral Delinquency in Children and Adolescents*, which at the Government's direction was distributed free to every home in New Zealand. This job taxed the capacity of the Department to its

<sup>1</sup>Eight thousand separate jobs were run off in 1952-53; 12,000 in 1953-54. In Christchurch two machines, with one full-time and one part-time operator, were able to handle all the work previously done by 14 machines located in various Departments. The aim was to provide a 24-hour service, not always possible to achieve.

<sup>2</sup>One of its earliest major jobs was the duplicating of the evidence heard by the Royal Commission on monetary, banking, and credit systems in 1956. This job totalled nearly 1,000,000 impressions; each day's evidence had to be available for the start of the following day's sitting - an arduous and exacting task.

<sup>3</sup>Photocopying and varityping services were later established in Wellington by the Department.

limit and emphasised once again the inadequacy of its premises. The staff were called on to work long hours. The *Moral Delinquency Report* – to shorten its title – came at a time when increasing Government activities were placing a heavier burden on the Printing Office. The work load at 31 March 1955 exceeded by more than 1,000 jobs the figure on 1 April 1954 – 3,289 jobs as against 2,260. No fewer than 15,349 jobs were completed during that year.

*“Planned Decentralisation”*

The policy of decentralisation approved by Cabinet in 1955 was not the complete answer to the Department’s accommodation problem. The main building, almost 70 years old at the time of this Cabinet decision, was long overdue for replacement, and on 4 April 1956 Cabinet approved “in principle” the planning of a new building of approximately 150,000 sq. ft. at the southern tip of Thorndon Quay. This site was a vast improvement on that at Seaview. It was on the fringe of the planned “Government Centre” and less than 200 yards from Parliament Buildings, the main source of the bulk of the Department’s work.

In the meantime, “planned decentralisation” was in full swing. In 1955 the Ruling Branch was transferred from Miramar to premises in Wingfield Street, a move which suggests concentration rather than the opposite. But it was the prelude to more important moves. On this branch’s old site at Miramar a separate plant was established for the printing of telephone directories – its sole function. In Douglas Street, near the corner of Adelaide Road just south of the Basin Reserve, a four-storeyed building of approximately 20,000 sq. ft. was bought by the Ministry of Works in 1956 for the Department’s offset printing plant, at that time dispersed among three separate premises. The addition of bindery and dispatch facilities made the offset printing plant completely self contained and independent of the main factory.<sup>1</sup>

The establishment of the telephone directory plant at Miramar was the first major step in the decentralisation plan. The old time-wasting expedient of having branches scattered throughout Wellington and the Hutt Valley wherever accommodation could be found for them had been forced upon the Department to relieve the congestion at its headquarters. With separate, independent factories handling different jobs, work no longer had to be carried

<sup>1</sup>The Douglas Street premises were not occupied until 1957 as alterations to the building were necessary. The building was extended a further 7,000 sq. ft. in 1963.



back and forth between the main plant and the branch. Time was saved, transport costs reduced, unnecessary handling eliminated, supervision made easier.

An inspection of the main building by Ministry of Works engineers in 1956 caused some anxiety when it revealed that the floors in many parts of the building were heavily overloaded. The building, in fact, was not designed to carry modern high-speed machinery, which apart from its own weight creates further stresses through vibration while operating at full speed, and adds further weight through the quantity of material it handles. A large quantity of material and type was removed from the building and stored temporarily in the Wingfield Street premises and in other buildings; it was then shifted back to the main factory for processing, a costly and unsatisfactory diversion of effort.

At this time, apart from the self-sufficient Petone and Miramar branches, the Department had in Wellington eight other branches, four bulk stores, two clerical branches, and two duplicating pool establishments. "The dispersal of the Department over so many locations leads to the waste of a vast amount of time and money in transporting work, staff, and records back and forth," Mr Owen wrote on 9 May 1957. None of these subsidiary establishments was completely independent of the main plant, and most of the work they handled had eventually to pass through the main building for completion: "... the relief afforded in the main building is to some extent illusory," the Government Printer commented.

A further factory was taken over in 1958. This was a five-storey building in Walter Street, in the Te Aro flat area, formerly a clothing and sporting-goods factory. To it was moved from the main building all the jobbing and forms work, together with sufficient letterpress machinery and binding equipment to make it independent of the main factory. New rotary printing presses were also installed. The Railway Ticket Printing Branch in the main building and the Ruling Branch in Wingfield Street were also transferred to Walter Street.<sup>1</sup> These flights from home reduced the load on the floors of the old building and gave more room to those who remained; but it was still, in the Government Printer's words, "a somewhat hazardous working place" for several hundred employees.

At the end of 1958, five separate, self-contained printing establishments were in operation in the Wellington area. They were the main factory and head office in Lambton Quay, the factories at Petone and Walter Street, the Photo-offset Branch in Douglas

<sup>1</sup>The Stationery Office at Aotea Quay moved to Wingfield Street in January 1959. The Aotea Quay premises were retained for the storage and distribution of departmental forms.

Street, and the telephone directory and school publications factory at Miramar. Three duplicating and addressograph services were then operating in Thorndon Quay, Stout Street, and in Courtenay Place; a stationery office in Aotea Quay; clerical and administrative sections in the annexe at the rear of the Government Buildings; bulk stores at Seaview and in Molesworth Street.<sup>1</sup> The coordination of the work of these separate establishments was often difficult.

Another suburban responsibility for the Department was the reorganisation of the printing plant in the Wellington Prison on Mount Crawford, run by the Department of Justice. For many years this plant had produced small jobs for that Department's use, but it was decided in 1957 to extend its scope and to use its facilities to train prisoners in the printing trade. Plant was made available by the Printing Office and new plant bought; it was installed and tested by the Engineering Branch, and the Department's apprentice instructors visited the prison to teach the elementary skills of the various trades.

Spreading farther afield, the Department had an interest in the running of the Government Printing Office in Western Samoa. In 1956 the Assistant Works Manager, Leo McGann, went to Samoa at the request of the Department of Island Territories to investigate a proposal to establish a Government Printing Office at Apia. Five Samoan youths received training in New Zealand, and the Department's night staff overseer, Mr V. W. Wilson, was seconded to Samoa in 1958 to establish the office. With him went the Department's assistant engineer, Mr G. H. Burton, to supervise the installation of the plant. Mr Wilson remained in Samoa until 1961, but Mr Burton returned to New Zealand when his work was completed.

Two other members of the staff served relieving periods as Government Printers in Pacific island territories during 1958. At the request of the Tongan Government, Mr H. Adkins went to Tonga for six months to enable the Government Printer there to take his furlough, while Mr S. W. Lawton spent four months in Rarotonga on a similar assignment.

The Department has also helped to train the staff of these Pacific island Government Printing Offices, and at various times men from Samoa, Rarotonga, Tonga, and Fiji have received training in New Zealand.

<sup>1</sup>See diagram, *Locations and Services*, on p. 147 for the location of these various branches. This diagram also includes the new Mulgrave Street building and the new factory built at Evans Bay (Kilbirnie) in 1961.

*Shift Work*

Shift work, never popular with the staff, was again resorted to in the Department in 1956, first in the Binding Branch. So much work was going through the presses that private firms had to be called on to do the binding on several large jobs during the year and to take over the printing of others.<sup>1</sup> There was simply no more room in the Printing Office in which to put more bookbinders, so the work had to be done outside. The transport of unfinished work is risky and costly; loose sheets are difficult to handle and some could be lost in transit. A night shift was therefore established in the Binding Branch.

"It is becoming increasingly evident," Mr Owen wrote in May 1956, "that shift work will have to be resorted to in the Department to a greater degree, firstly to cope with the quantity and size of jobs now required without duplication of plant and premises, and secondly to obtain the utmost economical use from highly priced modern printing equipment."

During these years a constant watch was kept for any improvements in methods or for new processes which would speed up production or reduce costs. Wherever possible operations were mechanised: it was only by increased mechanisation that the Department was able to increase its production year by year and at the same time bear the loss of skilled staff. The use of photocopying methods and typewriter-type composing machines relieved some of the pressure in the composing room, and in the bindery the combination of various machines in tandem helped to eliminate unnecessary handling.

Some of the suggestions for improvements in methods and organisation came from the employees themselves, encouraged by financial reward where their suggestions were adopted. The first of these "suggestions campaigns", as they have come to be known, in the Printing Office was inaugurated by the Department in 1953 in conjunction with the Public Service Commission. Two hundred and ninety-six suggestions were received in the 10 working days of the campaign. This result was so encouraging that the scheme has been continued; in the year 1955-56, £93 was paid out in awards. One suggestion from a member of the staff that lighter paper be used in most of the Department's jobs meant a saving of several thousands of pounds a year in the country's overseas funds. A further saving in overseas funds was effected by the use of New Zealand made paper for printing the smaller telephone directories.

<sup>1</sup>In his annual reports the Government Printer frequently acknowledged "with gratitude" the help given by these private printing houses.



The use of smaller type in *Hansard* – a suggestion which came from the Attorney-General – reduced the cost of printing the 1958 volumes by £3,800.

The introduction of PAYE taxation in 1958 meant long hours and lost holidays to meet the deadlines required by this change in legislation. Orders for tax tables, explanatory booklets, and income tax forms of all kinds flooded in from the Department of Inland Revenue, and a small staff was required to work throughout the Christmas holidays of December 1957 to complete these orders on time. Two shifts were worked in some sections of the factory. Other officers were called back from leave when urgent work connected with the introduction of import licensing had to be done; as on other occasions, they met these demands cheerfully.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Import licensing drastically reduced the Department's imports of stationery, but satisfactory substitutes for some articles were obtained from local manufacturers.

## SALES AND PUBLICATIONS

WITH few exceptions, the sale of Government publications over the years has been steady rather than spectacular. A concerted effort to improve sales was begun early in the 1950s with striking results, the returns for the year 1953-54 showing an increase of nearly £10,000. Newspaper advertising, book reviews, mail order publicity, and circulars to the bookselling trade were the main methods adopted; the mail order business, particularly, increased beyond recognition. As the Department's publications became better known, sales increased, and in 1955-56 the service was extended to include the publications of a number of other Government Departments, sold through the Publications Branch of the Printing Office on commission. Sports instruction booklets and booklets on housing were especially popular, editions of over 10,000 copies being sold.<sup>1</sup>

One of the exceptions to the pattern of steady sales was *A Descriptive Atlas of New Zealand*, edited by the Parliamentary Historian, Dr A. H. McLintock. Twelve thousand copies were printed; all were sold within a few hours of publication in November 1959. A reprint of 20,000 copies was immediately begun and was ready for sale in November 1960. This time the demand was not quite so spectacular, although orders for a large part of the reprint had been received before it appeared. A further revised edition is being prepared. It will include many new photographs and more maps; the descriptive text is being revised and its statistical material brought up to date.

The *Atlas* sales boosted the Department's revenue from Government publications to the record figure of £165,986 for the year ending 31 March 1961. The range of titles in the Department's catalogue was growing steadily each year. In 1958 the first of four volumes of Dr McLintock's history of parliamentary government in New Zealand, *Crown Colony Government in New Zealand*, was published. On its title page it introduced a colophon, the "trade

<sup>1</sup>Nine booklets, prepared by the Physical Education Branch of the Department of Education, cover most New Zealand summer and winter sports.

mark", in a sense, of the Government Printing Office. This colophon, designed by Dr McIntock, comprises a crown (representing Government), a Maori carving, and a book (the publisher's product). It has come to be widely recognised as a symbol of New Zealand craftsmanship.

The quality of this craftsmanship is effectively displayed in the Government Printing Office book of type faces, published in 1952. The book contains a selection of the type faces and paper available in the Printing Office. It was designed and set up by William Sinclair, then the Department's typographer.

One of the largest jobs undertaken by the Department in recent years was the reprinting of the *New Zealand Statutes*. The work was begun in 1958 and completed in March 1961. The reprint comprised 16 volumes, each of approximately 900 pages, the result of years of work by the Law Draftsman and his staff in the consolidation and annotation of New Zealand legislation in force up to 31 December 1957. Earlier reprints of the statutes were published in 1908 and again in 1931.

Another major work in preparation is *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, a three-volume project edited by Dr McIntock. Contributed articles on a wide range of topics, maps and diagrams prepared by the Cartographic Branch of the Department of Lands and Survey, numerous photographs and line drawings fill some 950 pages in each volume. In an edition of 35,000, the *Encyclopaedia* will provide an authoritative reference work on New Zealand.

Twenty-five of the volumes of the New Zealand official war history have also been printed by the Department. These have ranged in size from 320 to 720 pages of text, with coloured fold-out maps, line blocks, and half-tone illustrations. Several of the early volumes are now out of print.

The productions of the School Publications Branch of the Department of Education, also printed by the Government Printer, have received widespread praise. These include school textbooks, primary and post-primary bulletins, and the school journals, all attractively designed and illustrated.<sup>1</sup> The school journals, in particular, received much favourable comment at the UNESCO regional seminar on publications for schools, held in Wellington in February 1960. An exhibition of international educational publications was displayed at this seminar.

A number of the Department's publications have been selected for inclusion in the New Zealand section of the International Book Exhibitions held in London, and subsequently in other

<sup>1</sup>Even an arithmetic book can be made to look attractive.



centres in the United Kingdom. Five of the 11 New Zealand publications in the 1961 exhibition were published by the Government Printer.

To cope with the expanding mail-order business new establishments have been opened in Auckland, Christchurch, Hamilton, and Dunedin. These shops have considerably increased the Department's sales to the public as well as the orders received through local booksellers. The Department is also the New Zealand agent for the sale and distribution of a number of United Nations, World Health Organisation, international, and Commonwealth publications. A 24-page booklet listing these publications is issued quarterly by the Department.

### *The Style Book*

An essential tool of any printing office is its style book. Should numbers be spelled out or written in figures, does State have a capital "s" or is it printed in lower case, is there an "e" in "milage", should "proofreader" be hyphenated, how should tables be set? Authors and editors, proofreaders and "comps",<sup>1</sup> typists and printers, anyone who works with words has his own preferences as to how they should be spelt, which should be in italics, which should have capitals and which not. The Government Printing Office style for official documents such as statutes, regulations, and *Gazette* notices was fixed after consultation with the Law Draftsman, but for most other publications the Printing Office usually conformed with the requirements of the Department sponsoring that publication. The result, at times, was chaotic.<sup>2</sup>

In 1952 a style committee was established to lay down an official style for all the Printing Office's publications. The original committee comprised the Government Printer, as chairman, the Law Draftsman, Professor Ian Gordon of Victoria University of Wellington, and representatives of the Education, Scientific and Industrial Research, and the Printing and Stationery Departments.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>No book is set solely by one compositor.

<sup>2</sup>The Parliamentary Select Committee of 1880 had something to say on this:

"It appears that at present every department sends its work to the Printer when and how it chooses, with, of necessity, an entire absence of any feeling of responsibility as to the cost of what is ordered. So loose a system must produce carelessness; and we are not surprised to learn that copy is sent to the printer in a very unprepared state, the authors, in too many instances, appearing to formulate ideas for the first time under the inspiration of the printer's type. The needless waste of money arising from this want of system is much to be regretted."

<sup>3</sup>Mr A. S. Wickens, one of the copy supervisors, took a prominent part in this work.

Representatives of other Departments have since been added to the committee or have been consulted on special aspects of its work.

Booklets on punctuation, the preparation of copy, spelling, proofreaders' marks, and other aspects of printing style have been published as a result of the committee's work. They have filled a long-standing need. These booklets formed the basis of the Government Printing Office *Style Book* published in December 1958. A smaller booklet, *Reminders, an Aid to Readers and Writers*, was also published by the Department. The *Style Book* has been adopted by the New Zealand Federation of Master Printers for use by its members.

One major benefit of a uniform style is the saving in cost. Inconsistencies in spelling and punctuation, in the use of capitals and abbreviations, in the spelling of compound words, etc., have become fewer, and time spent in correcting proofs and resetting lines in which corrections were necessary has been reduced. The rising costs of printing have been a cause of concern to the Department in recent years. Wage increases in 1956, to take one example, increased the Department's salaries and overtime bill for a year by £50,000. The price of paper in January 1957 increased by an average of £3 10s. a ton, while other materials rose in price also. New Zealand's small population limits the size of editions printed in the Dominion; in book work there are certain fixed costs which vary little whether 5,000 or 50,000 copies are published. In consequence, the price of locally produced books, published in small editions, is high.

#### *Document Reproduction Service*

The growth of the Department's central "copying" services has been phenomenal. Many of the smaller jobs formerly done by letterpress are now handled by the free duplicating services or by the Document Reproduction Service, formed in 1958 by the amalgamation of the Department's Plan Printing and Multilith Branches and located on the ground floor of the Lambton Quay building. The Document Reproduction Service took over photocopying work from the National Publicity Studios, and the service was extended to Auckland and to Christchurch.<sup>1</sup> So successful was the pool system that other Departments had little hesitation in transferring their equipment and their work to these central services.

<sup>1</sup>Surveys conducted in 1957 by the Organisation and Methods staff of the Public Service Commission recommended the establishment of pool services in these centres. These commenced operations in 1959. Similar services were later established in Hamilton (January 1961) and Dunedin (May 1962).







Kilbirnie Branch

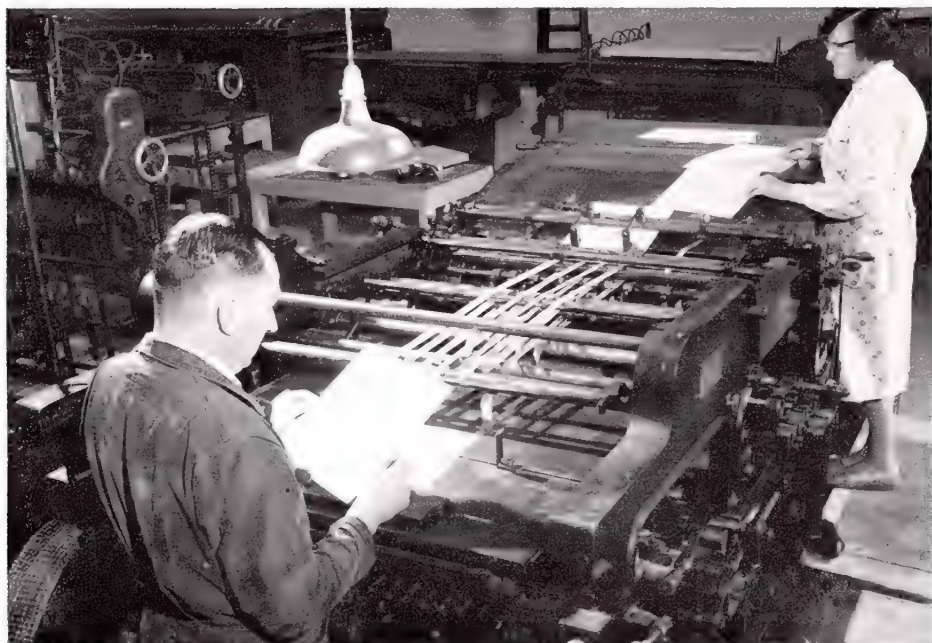
Folding machines, Bindery Section



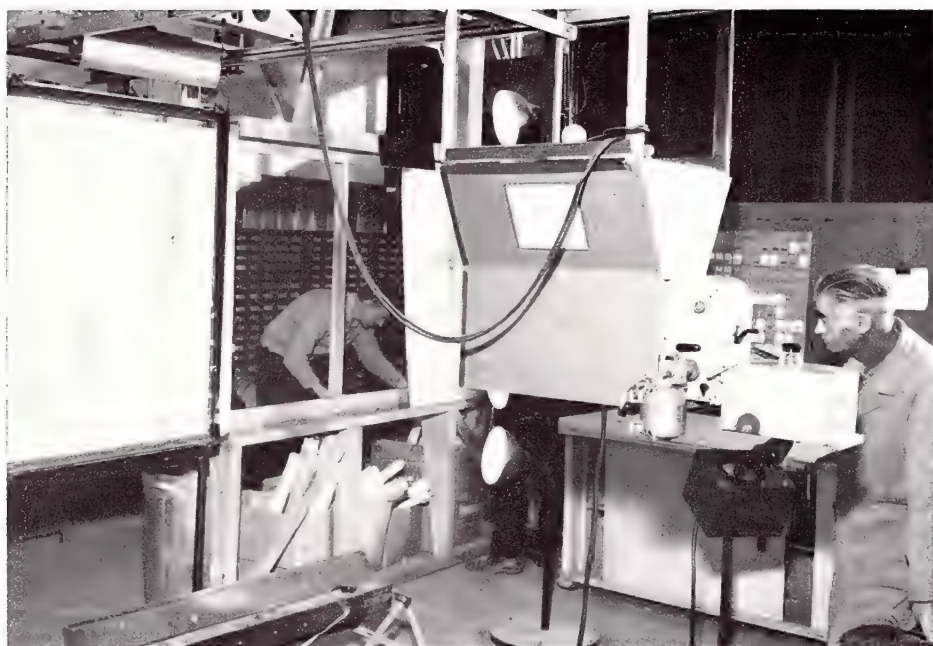


Stationery and Forms Store, Kilbirnie

Stamp Printing Branch, Kilbirnie







Photofile camera, Document Reproduction Branch, Waterloo Quay

Multilith machines, Document Reproduction Branch



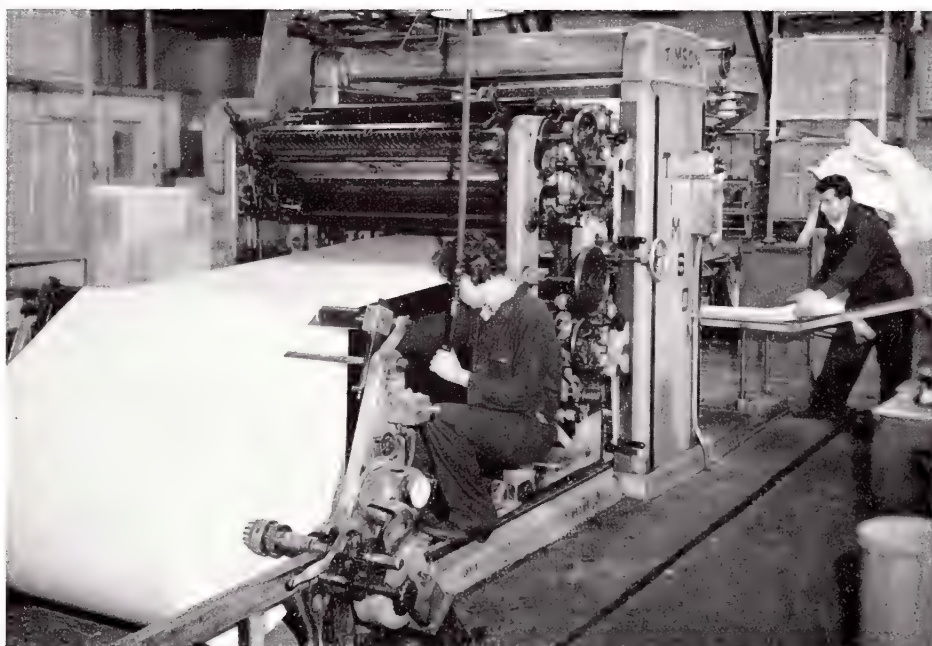




Addressograph Branch, Waterloo Quay

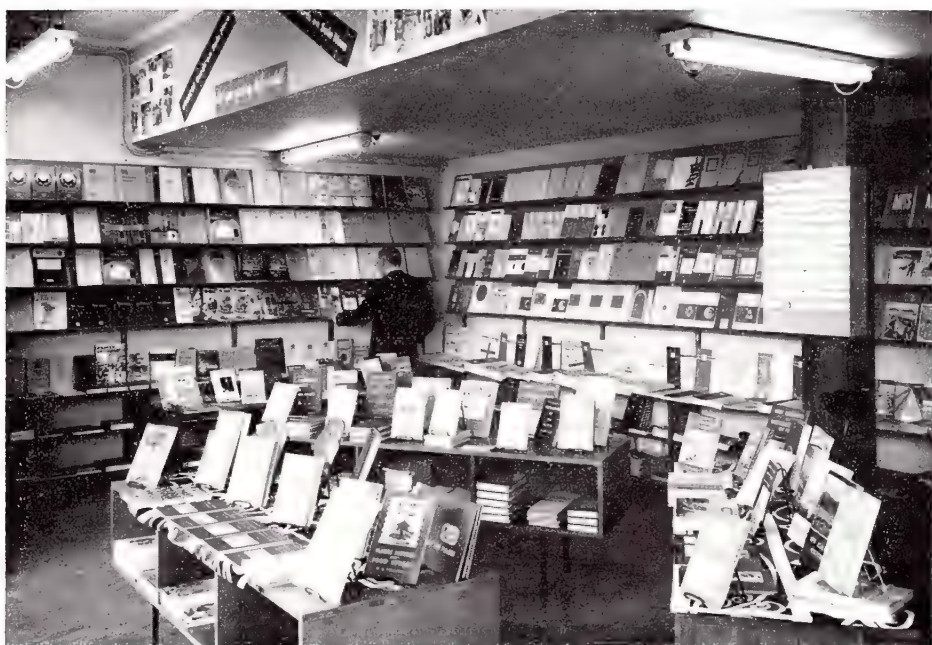
Sheridan Binder, Miramar. This machine can collate and bind up to 4,000 telephone directories an hour





Single-web letterpress rotary machine. Used for printing telephone directories

Interior of the Government Printing Office Bookshop, Molesworth Street





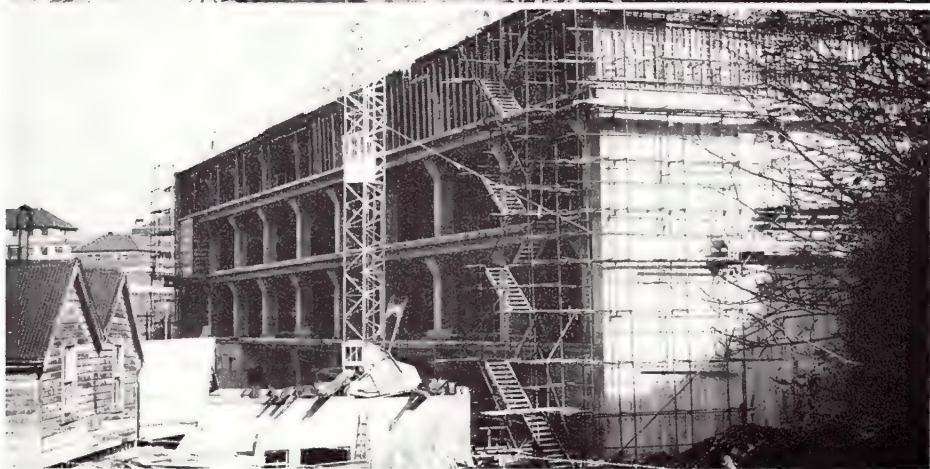


Petone Branch

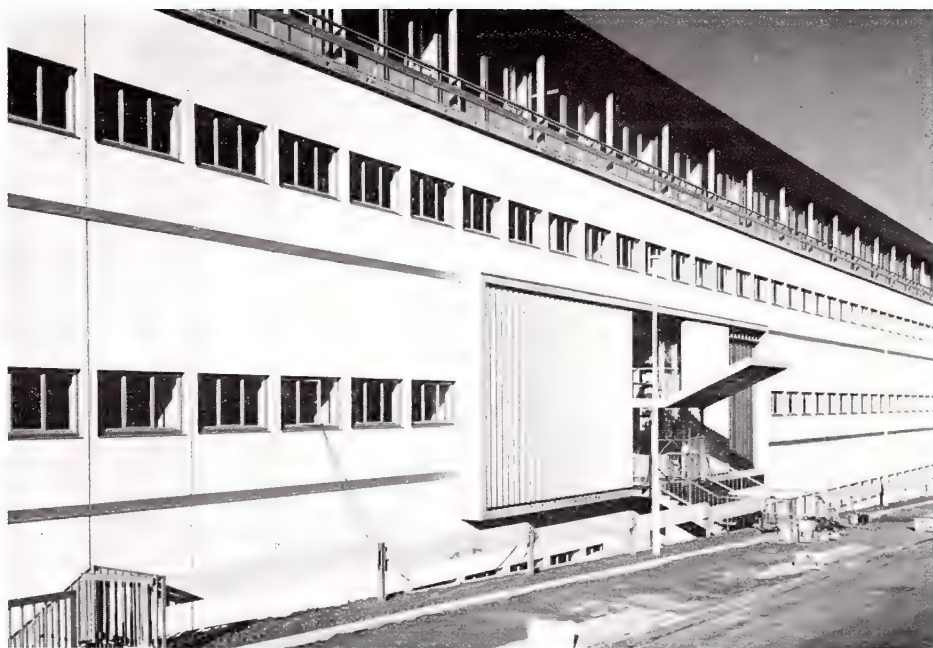
Letterpress and composing sections, Petone







Three stages in the construction of the new Printing Office: clearing the site, 1961; Laying the foundations, 1962; At fourth-floor level, 1964



The Mulgrave Street frontage of the new Printing Office showing the partially completed main entrance

View of the new building from Thorndon Quay







Part of the 27,000 square feet Bindery floor in the new building

Accounts Branch on the administration floor

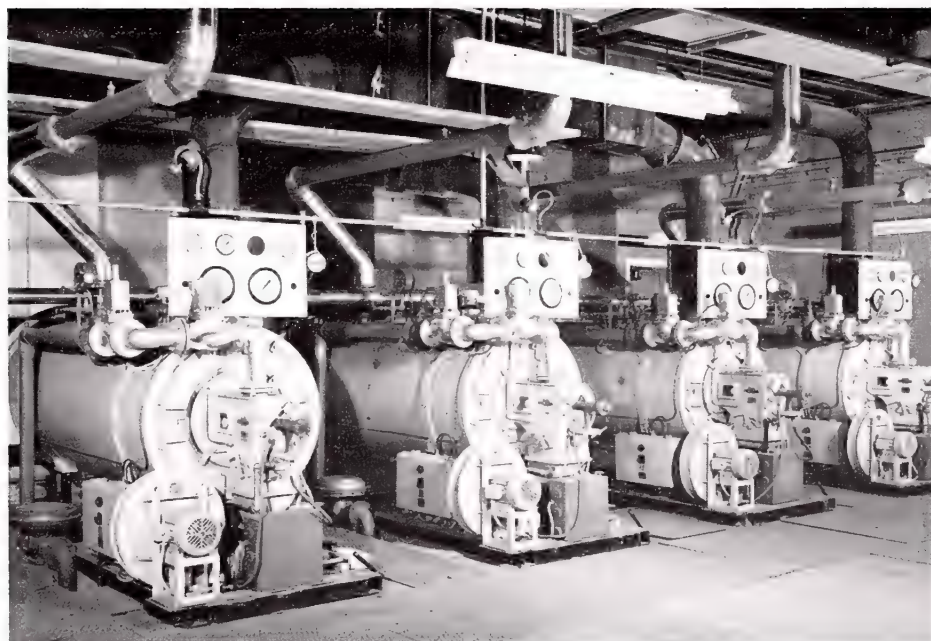






The modern cafeteria of the new building provides seating for approximately 160

Automatically controlled boilers supply heating and hot-water services throughout the building





A. R. Shearer  
*Deputy Government Printer*



E. C. Keating  
*Chief Administration Officer*



L. V. McGann  
*Works Manager*



G. H. Burton  
*Chief Engineer*





Lambton Quay staff



Waterloo Quay staff





Walter Street staff



Douglas Street staff



Miramar staff

Accounts, Publications, and Process staff







Kilbirnie staff

Petone staff





Some idea of their growth can be gained from the following figures, which show the combined output of the Department's central services.<sup>1</sup>

<i>Plan Printing and Photocopying</i>		<i>Year Ended</i>	
		<i>31 March 1957</i>	<i>31 March 1966</i>
Plan printing (prints made)	..	248,680	857,132
Copycat etc. (prints made)	..	35,617	162,315
Photofile (negatives)	..	8,068	91,204
<i>Offset Duplicating</i>			
Xerox mats made	..	546	266,813
Total impressions printed	..	11,390,000	61,339,000
<i>Stencil Duplicating</i>			
Stencils	..	53,010	223,642
Total impressions printed	..	6,427,800	25,658,200

An outstanding contribution to the success of the Department's document reproduction work, especially on the technical side, was made by Mr C. H. O. Lane, who retired in April 1960. Mr Lane was the Department's chief technical adviser in this field, and at the time of his retirement was controlling officer of the document reproduction service in Wellington. His technical knowledge enabled him to develop techniques and equipment which allowed the service to cope successfully with the heavy demands made on it by all Government Departments. The figures in the preceding paragraph record its achievements.

In 1961 the service was extended by the establishment of a micro-film unit in Wellington. A number of small units in other Government Departments were closed down and their equipment and work transferred to the Printing Office. A night staff was also established in the Document Reproduction Branch to cope with the increased volume of work.

Another field in which the Department's staff has played its part is in the recording of proceedings of international conferences and royal commissions held in Wellington. Behind the scenes at these conferences reports and agenda are printed and a verbatim record of proceedings prepared ready for circulation on the following day. Two officers served for six weeks on the staff of the document reproduction section of the Colombo Plan conference in 1956, and their work in duplicating and circulating documents won praise. Similar service was provided for the SEATO Council meeting in Wellington in 1959. A specially selected unit under the control of Mr C. M. Howison, officer in charge of the Duplicating and

<sup>1</sup>These jobs are not included in the annual statistics for the Printing Office.

Addressograph Branch, was seconded to this conference, which lasted three weeks, and a special night staff was engaged to ensure that the verbatim record of the meetings was printed and circulated in readiness for next day's session.

For the ECAFE conference in Wellington in March 1965, a staff of five machinists operated the duplicators and eight others collated, assembled, and stapled the various reports and documents. The staff, under Mr Howison, worked under pressure for the whole of the conference, which lasted a fortnight.

In 1964 a new branch of the document reproduction and addressing services was opened at the Technical Correspondence Institute in Wellington to handle the large volume of work required for correspondence students. A similar service was later opened in Rotorua.

#### *Old Building Demolished*

In the meantime there were further evacuations from the old building on the Quay. The Government Printer himself and his administrative section were transferred in 1961 to a newly erected temporary building on Waterloo Quay; with them went the document reproduction, duplicating, and addressing services. The Binding and Stamp Printing Branches went further afield in December 1961 to a new single-floor factory of approximately 50,000 sq. ft. on reclaimed land at Evans Bay. The Publications Section moved to the Griffin Building in Molesworth Street; but the main object of the exercise was to clear part of the Lambton Quay premises. The older part of this building, which had become increasingly unsafe with the passage of years, was demolished and in part decapitated in July 1962. Part of the ground floor, which was reroofed, and the single-storey annexe at the north-west corner were retained to house the parliamentary printing plant and the copy supervisors, the latter back again in the main building after brief banishment to the Hotel Cecil building across the road.

#### *Printing and Stationery Reviewing Committee*

In June 1961 a Printing and Stationery Reviewing Committee was established on Cabinet's instructions to examine all printing orders and stationery requisitions from Government Departments. The Committee was formed from representatives of the Public Service Commission, Treasury, and the Printing and Stationery Department; subsidiary committees were later established also in Auckland and Christchurch. Their object was to effect economies

in the use of printing and stationery; and so successful were their operations that a direct saving of £30,000 (the Government Printer's estimate) was achieved within a year. The Department's requirements of paper for 1962 were 400 tons less than for the previous year, an approximate saving of £60,000 in overseas funds. One reason for this saving was the Committee's decision to limit requisitions for printed forms to one year's supply.

After reviewing the results of the Committee's operations for the first six months, Cabinet directed in March 1962 that it should function permanently.

### *Aotea Quay Fire*

These economies were important; but they were made more important still by a disastrous fire which spread from the adjoining NAC buildings on Aotea Quay on the night of 13 July 1961 and totally destroyed the Department's bulk forms store. Seven hundred tons of printed forms, valued at over £200,000, were lost in the fire, as well as another £25,000 worth of bulk stationery and plant.

The forms belonged to some 17 Government Departments, and the problem of replacing them had to be faced at once. Offers of assistance came from printers throughout the country, and with their help a huge volume of forms was quickly reprinted with only minor inconvenience. Departments cooperated by borrowing stocks of forms from other districts.

Alternative accommodation for the bulk forms store had to be found temporarily in the factory at Kilbirnie. In December 1961 Cabinet approved the construction of a new building of 23,000 sq. ft. in this area to house these forms, but delays in drawing the plans deferred the start of the building until early 1964. The store was completed in October 1965. When the stationery office in Wingfield Street was demolished in 1966 the Kilbirnie store became the Stationery and Forms Store.

### *"How Urgent is Urgent?"*

To each Government Department its own work is all important, and the claims for urgency and priority which beset the Production Branch or the duplicating services each day have to be weighed and considered. Some jobs are genuinely urgent; others have become urgent because of lack of foresight in some Department. Unlike the private printer, the Government Printing Office, responsible for all the printing requirements of the State, cannot decline an order from any Department.



The rules of the Government Printing Office provide for an interval of six months between the placing of an order and the delivery of a job; but for parliamentary work, or to meet legislative requirements, this interval is reduced to weeks or even to days. Far too many orders for the reprinting of departmental forms have to be accorded "extreme urgency" because the Department concerned has overlooked its requisition until its current stocks are almost exhausted. Staff and machines have to be switched from other work to rush these orders through, or an outside printer willing to do the job in a hurry has to be found at short notice. Production schedules have sometimes to be cast aside and efficiency sacrificed for expediency.

### *New Machines, New Processes*

Three new machines installed in 1961 are worthy of notice. A two-colour Crabtree offset press, capable of producing 10,000 impressions an hour and printing two colours simultaneously, is believed to be the fastest sheet-fed press in New Zealand. A "Monophoto" filmsetter machine in the Photo-offset Branch was the first of its kind in the country; it produces film from which offset plates are made.<sup>1</sup> Last, but not least, was the "Master M32" powderless etching machine, described by the Government Printer at the time it was installed as a most revolutionary step in chemical engraving. With this machine the Process Blockmaking Branch can produce an etched plate in a little over 15 minutes as against the three hours formerly required by the old method.

The introduction of rotary printing presses and the addition of a combined gathering, stitching, and covering machine (the Sheridan Binder) reduced by one-third the cost of printing telephone directories at the Miramar factory.<sup>2</sup> Most revolutionary introduction of all, however, was the Fotolist system installed at Douglas Street in 1963. A high-speed sequential card camera photographs the typed cards for each telephone subscriber (filed in alphabetical order) at the rate of 7,200 cards an hour. Printing plates are prepared from these photographic negatives. The old time-consuming chores of setting type, pulling and checking galley proofs, and making corrections has been eliminated, nor is it necessary to hold and store galleys of type for each directory from

<sup>1</sup>By this process the copy for future reprints is held as film instead of metal type, thus alleviating storage problems.

<sup>2</sup>A three-knife guillotine trims all three edges of the completed directory in one operation.

year to year. When all of New Zealand's 21 directories are changed over to the new system a more up-to-date service will be provided for subscribers.

Some of these telephone directories have grown greatly in size. In the 10 years of the 1950s the Auckland directory grew from 255 to 640 pages (156,750 copies), the total number of pages increasing from 16 million in 1950 to 100 million in 1959. Part of this increase was due to the introduction of the "yellow pages" classified trade directory, but most of it resulted from the expansion of New Zealand's telephone system through the opening of new automatic exchanges. The present Auckland directory comprises 872 pages, with an edition of 254,000 copies. Wellington's directory has 640 pages. Extensions made to the plant at Miramar give it the capacity to print a directory of approximately 1,000 pages. The covers are printed by the Douglas Street Photo-offset Branch.<sup>1</sup>

Other new processes are being constantly introduced in other branches of the Printing Office, especially in the fields of typewriter composing and photolithography. Membership of overseas printing research organisations has enabled the Department to keep abreast with the development of new techniques, some of which were first introduced to New Zealand by the Government Printing Office.

With the passage of years, the tools of the public servant have changed beyond recognition. Penholder and steel nib and ruled foolscap and rolls of red tape – it is more often pink – have given way to the ballpoint pen, the typewriter, and the roll of Sellotape. Neither ballpoint pens nor cellulose tape were stocked by the Department's stationery offices before the 1950s, but both are now distributed in quantity. In 1959–60, for example, 32,500 rolls of Sellotape (each 72 yards in length) and 7,000 ballpoint pens were distributed.

The ballpoint pens are locally made, as are the typewriter ribbons, calendars, diaries, carbon paper, duplicating paper, and dozens of other items issued to Departments. Wherever possible, provided quality and price are satisfactory, the products of New Zealand manufacturers are given preference to those from overseas. New Zealand made paper is also used in many of the telephone directories. The Nelson directory of February 1960 was the first directory printed entirely (except for the cover) on New Zealand made paper. In recent years, as the quality of New Zealand made paper has improved, it has been used more extensively in the Department.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The 1964 directories used more than 700 tons of paper, 6.2 tons of ink, and 110 miles of wire for stapling.

<sup>2</sup>About 60 per cent of the paper used is locally made.

*Liaison with Other Printers*

Liaison with Government printing establishments in Australia and other parts of the Commonwealth is maintained by the Department. Information on production methods and equipment and on new processes is exchanged and periodic conferences held. The first conference of Australasian Government Printers to be held in New Zealand took place in February 1961, its agenda including discussions on apprentice training, production control, purchasing procedures, and plant planning and maintenance.<sup>1</sup> An exchange scholarship for selected apprentices in their final year of training was established as a result of the discussions at this conference. In January 1962 the first winner of this scholarship, M. W. Grace, a fifth-year bookbinding apprentice, left for Sydney to continue his training at the New South Wales Government Printing Office. The 1963 winner, P. P. Hakaraia, an apprentice compositor, spent his term at the Government Printing Office in Melbourne; in 1964 M. R. Forman, another composing apprentice, was attached to the Government Printing Office in Sydney; and in 1965 D. M. Banks, an apprentice photo lithographer, was attached to the Government Printing Office in Melbourne. The New Zealand scholarships alternate between Sydney and Melbourne in successive years, but both Australian offices send an apprentice to New Zealand each year.<sup>2</sup> This exchange scheme, originally intended to run for three years, is being continued. Allen Whitney, a fifth-year letterpress machinist, is the present holder of this scholarship. He is at present working in the Government Printing Office in Sydney.

Liaison is closely kept, too, with other printing organisations in New Zealand. In recent years the Government Printer has frequently acknowledged his debt to the New Zealand Federation of Master Printers, the most notable recent occasion being the help given by private printing firms after the destruction of the Department's bulk forms store in the Aotea Quay fire. Close collaboration has also been maintained with the New Zealand Paper Merchants' Association, the Process Engravers' Federation, the New Zealand Stationers' Guild, the Associated Booksellers of New Zealand, the Printing and Related Trades Industrial Union, and with a number of other trade organisations connected with the printing and stationery industry in New Zealand.

<sup>1</sup>Addresses by senior members of the Department's staff introduced each topic. Government Printers from Rarotonga, New Guinea, and Fiji also attended the conference. The report of its proceedings was the first publication in New Zealand to be set on the Monophoto filmsetter.

<sup>2</sup>Each scholarship winner is required to return to New Zealand after 12 months in Australia and to remain with the Department for at least two years. An apprentice stereotyper from New South Wales spent a year with the Department in 1962; two apprentices came here in 1963.



## ORGANISATION AND STAFF

THE Printing and Stationery Department operates under the direction of the Minister in Charge, a portfolio held in the present Government by the Hon. W. J. Scott. The Permanent Head of the Department is the Government Printer, Mr R. E. Owen.

Responsible direct to the Government Printer is the Deputy Government Printer, Mr A. R. Shearer. Under Mr Shearer's direct responsibility are the chief administration officer (Mr E. C. Keating), the Works Manager (Mr L. V. McGann), and the chief engineer (Mr G. H. Burton).

Six advisory committees, most of which meet weekly, deal with specific functions of the Department. They are:

*Production Committee*—mainly concerned with priorities in production.

*Tenders Committee*—deals with the purchase of paper, stationery, binding materials, and miscellaneous stores.

*Plant Committee*—deals with the purchase of new plant and equipment, the replacement of existing plant, the disposal of old plant, and the purchase or manufacture of furniture and fittings.

*Accommodation Committee*—deals with the acquisition of accommodation and its maintenance, repair, and alteration.

*Staff Committee*—deals with recruitment, promotions, grading, appointments, staff training, etc.

*Suggestions Committee*—encourages, examines, and evaluates staff suggestions and makes recommendations to the Government Printer. This committee meets as required.

The operations of the Department are carried on in 18 different locations in the Wellington - Hutt Valley area and at branch offices in Auckland, Christchurch, Hamilton, Dunedin, and Rotorua.

*The Front Office*

No organisation can function without its administrators, the men and women behind the scenes who "run" the Department. They keep the registers, pay the salaries, compute costs, send out the accounts, order the stores, write up the ledgers, record promotions, handle the correspondence, distribute the mail. They are the accountants, the clerks, the computers, the typists, who handle day by day the large volume of clerical work required to maintain the Government Printing Office. The rest of the staff knows them as the "Front Office". A brief description of their more important duties should illustrate their worth.

The Chief Administration Officer is responsible for general administration duties and for all the Department's clerical services. These include finance, costing, accounts, correspondence, stores purchasing and control, staff and personnel sections. Under his control are the stationery offices, the Publications Branch, the district offices, and the addressograph and duplicating services. This appointment was filled for some years by Mr G. R. A. Norton, who retired early in 1965. His successor is Mr E. C. Keating, formerly an administrative assistant.

The Accountant's duties are self-explanatory. This position is now held by Mr H. J. Le Page.

The computer computes costs. The hours worked on a job, whether by journeyman or apprentice, the material used, the corrections made: all the information recorded on daily work dockets and time sheets is costed and charged against the Department for which the job is being done. The collating of this information is the computer's responsibility. He totals all costs, adding fixed percentages to the cost of labour and materials to allow for overhead expenses and other departmental costs. Mr W. R. Cooper was the Department's computer for some 22 years before he retired in November 1955. The present computer, now designated Chief Costing Officer, is Mr A. Harris.

The Stores Officer, Mr W. A. Marsden, is responsible for the purchase, custody, and distribution of all paper, stationery, and other materials used by the Department. Requisitions for materials and equipment are sent to him by the overseers and controlling officers of the various branches. Tenders are then called for by the Stores Officer; if the material has to be obtained overseas, the tenders are called through the local representatives of overseas manufacturers. The final decision is made by the Tenders Committee, whose members may have before them samples submitted by the tenderer, and the order is then placed by the Stores Officer.

*Controlling Officers*

The following held office as controlling officers, overseers, etc., on 30 June 1966:

Austin, R. T.	-	Overseer, Letterpress
Burns, K.	-	Overseer, Process
Carter, J. F.	-	Overseer, Mechanical Typesetting
Clarke, L.	-	Officer-in-Charge, Document Reproduction
Day, C. B.	-	Chief Reader
Dry, E. R.	-	Production Superintendent
Durand, J. R.	-	Publications Officer
Easdon, W. T.	-	District Officer, Auckland
George, L. W.	-	Overseer, Binding
Goldfinch, F. K.	-	Supervisor, Petone
Harris, A.	-	Chief Costing Officer
Haugh, J. W.	-	Administration Officer
Howison, C. M.	-	Officer-in-Charge, Addressograph
Huntington, J.	-	Officer-in-Charge, Issuing Office
Le Page, H. J.	-	Accountant
Macrae, M. C.	-	Supervisor, Photo-offset
Mowat, J.	-	Overseer, Monocasting
Quinn, J. J.	-	Overseer, Gazette Room
Reeves, D. L.	-	District Officer, Christchurch
Rosenberg, C. F.	-	Overseer, Letterpress Night Staff
Smith, B.	-	Supervisor, Walter Street
Smith, P.	-	Overseer, Stereo
Stapleton, Miss D.	-	District Officer, Dunedin
Sullivan, C.	-	Chief Copy Supervisor
Taylor, J. J.	-	Production Superintendent
Taylor, P. G.	-	District Officer, Hamilton
Thomas, R. S.	-	Personnel Manager
Thomson, H.	-	Overseer, Photo-offset
Viner, P. N. L.	-	Officer-in-Charge, Rotorua
Wheeler, H.	-	Overseer, Stamp Printing
Whithair, J. R.	-	Supervisor, Stationery Office
Williams, J. R.	-	Supervisor, Miramar
Wilson, A. J.	-	Overseer, Letterpress
Wilson, V. W.	-	Overseer, Jobbing Composing
Wishart, R. R.	-	Overseer, Composing Night Staff

*Staff*

The acute shortage of tradesmen which has plagued the Printing Office for a number of years is still a major problem in the Department. Semi-skilled men can feed machines; but no machine can replace the craftsmanship of the skilled tradesman, achieved only after years of work and experience. The shortage is widespread



and the market in New Zealand competitive; private printers sometimes offer housing assistance, bonuses, and other incentives to attract skilled men.

At the present time the total staff of the Department numbers 923, comprising 651 men and 272 women. Of these, 843 are employed in Wellington.

The main trades represented in the Department are the traditional crafts of the printer. Compositors number 40, operators 20, letterpress machinists 24, bookbinders 24. There are 22 readers and 8 copyholders; 12 cutters, eight engravers, five stereotypers, four rotary machinists, and six copy supervisors. Two production superintendents, 13 supervisors, two suboverseers, and 29 foremen fill the main supervising positions in the printing works. Shortages in the ranks of tradesmen are illustrated in the proportion of photographic technicians (two) to assistants (nine); one Varitype operator to 10 Varitype trainees; three senior mechanics to 11 printer's mechanics. Three storekeepers, two head storemen, 10 senior storemen, and 43 storemen care for a multiplicity of stores and stationery; 337 men and women are described generally as assistants; and there are 101 apprentices under five apprentice instructors. There are far too many other trades to list here.

So severe was the shortage of compositors, letterpress machinists, and intertype operators in the early 1960s that three intertype operators and two "comps" were obtained from Australia for the 1961 session of Parliament. All were competent tradesmen and they assisted materially in carrying the extra burdens of the session. Similar assistance has been obtained in other years, but so far none of these men has decided to stay in New Zealand. Other tradesmen have been recruited in England as the result of an advertising campaign arranged by the New Zealand immigration office in London, but at no time have their numbers been sufficient to meet the Department's needs. These it has had to supply from its own apprentices.

Suitable clerical staff have also been difficult to find, especially in the Accounts Branch. Clerical assistants have been used to replace clerks, not always with satisfactory results as their work sometimes requires considerable supervision. This adds to the responsibilities of senior officers.

A number of girls from Samoa and other Pacific islands are employed in some of the branches, especially in the duplicating and document reproduction services. They have proved industrious and efficient workers: ". . . without them the Department would be in a difficult situation, and the services provided would undoubtedly be seriously affected," Mr Owen wrote in June 1964.

*The Readers*

The Government Printing Office has been well served over the years by its proofreaders and copyholders, whose care and skill is recorded for all to see in every page that has come from the Government's presses. Proofreading requires a special flair which enables the eye to read a passage for errors while the mind concentrates on its meaning. In this field the Government Printing Office has been served by many men of exceptional ability; it owes much to the wide general knowledge and the keen eyes of its reading staff. "Printer's errors", elusive to the eye on proof but there for all to see when a book is printed, have been remarkably few.

One of the early difficulties in the first Wellington Printing Office was the smallness of the reading "closets", those somewhat inelegantly named boxes in which the reader and his copyholder checked the author's "copy" with the galley proofs. These were so close together that the readers were frequently distracted by the sound of each other's voices.<sup>1</sup> The first reader was probably W. Kelleway, appointed on 1 April 1865, who combined the duties of compositor and reader. Other early readers named by Frank Rogers include Messrs Scales (one of the proprietors of the *Southern Cross*), McGlashan, Warren, Johnson, J. W. Henley, and W. Fuller. Chief readers have included Messrs H. S. Mountier (later copy supervisor), W. Stephens, W. Sutherland, P. Riddick, F. Davison, and J. J. P. Brown; and in more recent years Bill Stirrat and Clarrie Sullivan, the latter now Chief Copy Supervisor,<sup>2</sup> have ably filled this position.

Most of the readers have graduated from the ranks of the "comps", and many have become overseers and copy supervisors. The success of the Department's policy of training its own readers is obvious from the high standard of its productions. Girls are also now employed in the reading room and have proved their worth in an exacting job.

*The Apprentices*

Little mention has been made of apprentices in this narrative, but throughout the history of the Printing Office the training of apprentices in the various trades that make up the printing industry

<sup>1</sup>Didsbury reported in August 1870: "The work of reading requires the undivided attention of the Readers to enable them to perform their duties properly; and it is therefore desirable that their attention should not be distracted by the sound of each other's voices, or by the noises which proceed from the adjoining rooms."

<sup>2</sup>Ted Sparkes and Ernie Miller were Mr Sullivan's predecessors in this most responsible position. Both men spent the whole of their working lives in the Printing Office.

has formed an important part of the work of the Department. On Joseph Wilson's staff in 1864 there were two boys – John Joseph Robinson and John Francis Rogers.<sup>1</sup> William Gisborne, Under-Secretary in the Colonial Secretary's Office, referred to them in a minute on 5 July 1864 as "Printer's Devils . . . necessary adjuncts to all Printing Offices". Their job was to run messages, wet the paper, and assist the pressman. According to Frank Rogers, "green rollers and an Auckland summer", which caused the sheets to dry too quickly, made "a combination not pleasant to the pressman's assistants".

In June 1880, 45 apprentices were employed. They were classed as "machine and errand boys", were bound for a term of six years, and were paid from 8s. to 25s. per week. At the same date there were 22 "females" in the Binding Branch who were paid at the same rates but were not apprenticed. By March 1914 the number of apprentices – listed as such in the Public Service list – had fallen to nine; their salaries ranged from £39 to £100 a year. The lad on the lowest salary was 18 years of age and had worked three and a quarter years in the Printing Office to reach the dizzy height of 15s. a week.<sup>2</sup>

In March 1938, to jump a few years, 20 apprentices were employed in the Department. Their progress, in Mr Paul's words, was "subject to constant review, and a full and comprehensive training is afforded each one in his chosen trade". Boys were appointed to the staff with a view to apprenticeship if they were considered suitable. A boy could elect to be apprenticed in the trade he preferred, after consultation with his parents or guardians, and was then apprenticed to that trade when a vacancy occurred. A few apprentices, it must not be forgotten, eventually became Government Printers.

Apprentices are often called on early in their training to do journeymen's work, especially in those trades where there is a shortage of skilled labour. Intensive training courses under full-time instructors were introduced in the early 1950s to help overcome this shortage, and apprentices were able to carry out important and difficult work at an early stage in their training. Some branches relied on them extensively, and as their skills improved their responsibilities were extended. Training syllabuses were prepared in consultation with the Commissioner of Apprenticeship, and a technical library of books and trade papers established. After the

<sup>1</sup>Frank Rogers, as he was better known, served 43 years with the Department and retired on 31 December 1908. See also pp. 34n and 97.

<sup>2</sup>Machine-room apprentices took turns week about in cleaning up the Machine Room after work. An apprentice in 1916 received 6d. for an hour's overtime on this job.



war the annual intake of apprentices increased steadily, from one in 1944 to 19 in 1952.<sup>1</sup> By March 1957, 75 apprentices were employed in all branches; today the number has increased to 101.

Apprentices are encouraged to sit the New Zealand Trades Certification Board's examinations. Under specially appointed instructors in the various trades, each apprentice receives a thorough grounding in his trade, as well as "off-the-job" theory training of up to four hours a week. The Department's aim is to produce a first-class tradesman, for preference one who will make his career in the Government's service. But the lure of higher wages and bonuses outside the service is often too strong; in some trades up to 50 per cent of the apprentices leave the Department on qualifying as tradesmen. Some, regrettably, leave the trade; others take jobs in other printing houses.

The apprentice training scheme adopted by the Department was the first of its kind to be introduced into the printing industry in New Zealand. The trades in which apprentices can be trained in the Printing Office cover a wide range. They can become compositors, letterpress machinists, bookbinders, paper-rulers, photo-engravers and photolithographers, offset machinists, electricians, offset-lithography machinists, printer's mechanics, stereotypers, monotype casters, with a chance to specialise (for instance, as camera operators or platemakers) within these trades.

Each apprentice serves a period of six months' probation and sits an examination in English, arithmetic, and trade theory before being indentured. This probationary period is counted as part of the apprentice's five-year term, in which he is required to complete 10,000 hours in his trade.

An old custom revived in the Printing Office in recent years is the "ringing-out" ceremony in which an apprentice who has served his time is welcomed to the ranks of the journeymen. The Government Printer presents him with a certificate that he has completed his apprenticeship; the Father of the Chapel accepts the apprentice as a full member of the brotherhood of the Chapel; and the new journeyman, now "Mister", makes a tour of the workroom with his overseer to the accompaniment of a noisy welcome from his workmates as chases or any other metal pieces of equipment are banged together with vigour. The parents of the new journeyman are usually invited to this ceremony.

Boys will be boys in any Department. In the days when the message boys in the Publishing Room made their deliveries to Departments by hand-cart, they built themselves a hut in some nearby

<sup>1</sup>The numbers then fell for some years, but increased again as a result of an intensive recruitment campaign by the Department.

bush in which to help pass the time while away from the office on errands. A ducking under the tap during the lunch hour was the boys' own punishment for any of their number who returned too smartly from an errand; but the comings and goings at the bush hideout were noticed by an officer of another Department and reported to the Government Printer, who promptly had the hut destroyed.

One of the Department's hand-carts,<sup>1</sup> heavy and cumbersome and hard to push, was disposed of for a time over the end of a wharf. However, dredging operations by the Harbour Board brought the cart to the surface and it was quickly returned to the Printing Office.

### *Students from Overseas*

Special courses of instruction have been conducted for Colombo Plan students, some of them with names varying in length from almost the full width of a 13-em column to two brief staccato syllables.<sup>2</sup> Most of these students have proved themselves enthusiastic, energetic, and keen to learn; they have returned to their own countries to do first-rate work as instructors in technical colleges and in their own printing works. These intensified courses, arranged in cooperation with the Department of External Affairs, have varied in length from four months to two years.

In 1956, to give an example, there were four Burmese Colombo Plan trainees attached to the Department, each learning a different trade. One was employed as a "comp", one in letterpress machining, one as a bookbinder, and the last in the photo-engraving trade. They spent two years with the Department. By arrangement with the Island Territories Department, five youths from Western Samoa also received training in various trades before taking up positions in the newly established Government Printing Office at Apia. Other Colombo Plan students have come from Malaya, Ceylon, Burma, and Sarawak; four student printers from Sierra Leone and Malawi (Nyasaland) have also received training under the special Commonwealth Aid to Africa Plan. Good reports on the work of these students when they return to their own countries have frequently been a source of pride to the Department.

<sup>1</sup>In 1914 the Printing Office message boys still made their deliveries in two-wheeler hand-carts. These were replaced, after several accidents, by a horse and van.

<sup>2</sup>A study of Printing Office names is an interesting exercise. A list of promotions published in the *Public Service Official Circular* early in 1965 ranges alphabetically from Afamasaga, Bhimbhai, and Dunne to Loibl, Madalinski, McCarthy, Parag, Ramji, Strong, and Wisnesky. The Government Printer's net has certainly been widely spread.

*Men – and Manners*

There are far too few people in this story. The Government Printing Office has had its share of “characters” but their foibles are seldom recorded. Names are difficult to remember – and sometimes better forgotten.

One of these characters in the twenties was known as “Hellfire Jack”. He was secretary for a local organisation known as the Protestant Political Association, and after preliminary lubrication he would press the objects of his organisation with a crusading fervour. Pulling Estimates on a hand press one night with a fellow worker of opposing religious views, he had the misfortune to catch his thumb between the lever of the press and the centre post. “I heard a mighty yell intermingled with a lot of very lurid language, and there was poor Jack’s thumb just about mangled to pieces,” his companion records. “I was accused of putting extra weight on the handle, but that’s a lie.”

On another occasion someone sold “Hellfire Jack” a ticket for a public concert. It was some time before he discovered that the ticket was for a Hibernian concert on St. Patrick’s night.

Some of the earlier “comps” were hard-drinking men. On night shift or on overtime, “square riggers” of beer would often be handily placed beside them on their frames. One pieceworker, an extremely fast “comp”, would stop setting now and again to clip away imaginary cobwebs from his frame with a large pair of scissors. Asked what he was doing he would invariably reply: “The bloody spiders keep on spinning their webs all over my frame.” The Royal Hotel, next door to the first Wellington Printing Office, was a popular meeting place at supper time (9.30 p.m.) during the parliamentary session.

Another piecehand had “reader trouble”; the reader was a comma fiend. Commas would be put in and taken out on the proofs at will, but all these corrections had to be made before the compositor’s piecework rates could be calculated. One day the piecehand was so incensed about the alterations being made to his setting that he set his next galley of matter with two commas at the end of each line. He took his pull into the reader with the remark: “Here, shove ’em where you like.”

Another piecework hand in the 1870s claimed to be the fastest typesetter in the world. He was incredibly fast, working to a rhythm that appeared slow to the eye, each movement effortless and unerring. It is claimed that he once set a 22 in. column, 18 ems wide, of nonpareil (6 point) with only one mistake in it – a turned letter. This man went to America and was known as the “Maoriland Slogger”. He is said to have been shot dead in New York.



Pieceworkers had their own type cases and always did their own "dissing" – distributing the type to its correct position in the case after printing was completed. In the days of handsetting this process took some time, and naturally piecehands were always careful to keep their cases "clean". If any particular letter was short a "comp" would carry a supply of it round in his vest pocket. As one photograph on p. 75 shows, some compositors always wore hats or caps while at work. The wearing of a bun hat in the early days was the badge of the "gaffer" – the overseer. Billy Gibson, overseer of the Gazette and Bills Room in the early 1920s, is remembered fondly as a very dapper gentleman who nearly always wore a bun hat. Mr Gibson completed over 40 years' service in the Department.

Several members of the staff later became members of Parliament. Fred Pirani, George Fisher, and Charles Chapman are three who are remembered. Perhaps their familiarity with parliamentary printing in the course of their work planted the seed of political ambition. Pirani was a "comp", a smallish man of some athletic prowess with a quick wit and a sharp tongue. Elected as member for Palmerston North in 1893, he was one of the Seddon Government's most trenchant critics. He was an M.P. for nine years, but was later unsuccessful in several elections.

George Fisher, five times mayor of Wellington, was in his day one of the finest speakers in the New Zealand Parliament. A vigorous personality, lucid and trenchant in speech, a Scot born in Dublin, he joined the staff of the Government Printing Office about 1869. Later he became a reporter on the *Independent* and served for 11 years on the staff of *Hansard* before being elected to Parliament as member for Wellington South in 1884. He held Cabinet rank as Minister of Education in 1887–89, when he resigned after a difference of opinion.

Charles Chapman was a linotype operator, secretary for nine years of the Wellington Typographical Union and later its president. He contested various parliamentary seats over a period of 20 years before he was elected as Labour member for Wellington North in 1928.<sup>1</sup>

### *The Chapels*

As is common in all large organisations, domestic problems in the day-to-day running of the Printing Office inevitably occur from time to time. With a staff of over 900, and with the rivalries natural

<sup>1</sup>For some years Mr Chapman championed the cause of the Printing Office staff in the House.

to various trades and between autonomous branches, it is remarkable that these occasions are so few. The Department has its own group of the Public Service Association and is represented on the local executive of that body;<sup>1</sup> but for the settlement of any minor differences that arise between any group of tradesmen and the management, the men have their own "chapels", presided over by the Father of the Chapel. To an outsider the term seems curious, but it is a survival of an old printing-house term to describe any association of journeymen in a printing office.<sup>2</sup> The Composing and Letterpress Branches and the bindery have their own separate chapels.

On many occasions the Government Printer has acknowledged his appreciation of the willing collaboration of the officers of the Printing Office chapels and the help received from them in the smooth running of his Department.

Many members of the staff – far too many to list here, or to incur the risk of omitting the names of some of them – have served all their working lives in the Department. Fathers have been succeeded by sons: in April 1950 seven men had sons working in the Department. Thomas Austin, a former member of the Hansard Room who died in 1950, was succeeded by a son and grandson; two sons of Mr W. Gillon<sup>3</sup> served apprenticeships as compositors; "Mac" Macrae, supervisor of the Photo-offset Branch in Douglas Street, has a son serving his apprenticeship as a printer's mechanic. There may be others whose names have not been recorded.

Many former members of the staff who have retired on superannuation meet annually to renew old friendships. As many as 85 have attended these reunions, the first of which was held in 1930. Old associates who have passed away are remembered, toasts honoured, and items given by various members.

### *The Social Whirl*

The first social event recorded – there may have been others earlier – was a "waygoose" held at Osgood's Hotel in Wellington on 19 October 1867. A waygoose (or wayzgoose) was originally an entertainment given by a master printer to his workmen in

<sup>1</sup>The rival claims of the New Zealand Printing and Related Trades Union and the Public Service Association to represent the Printing Office's employees were satisfactorily settled in August 1949 after early difficulties. An agreement signed by both parties defined their respective status and functions.

<sup>2</sup>The term is said to have originated from the fact that William Caxton in 1471 first set up his press in one of the chapels at Westminster Abbey.

<sup>3</sup>Mr Gillon retired in July 1965 after 40 years in the Printing Office.

August each year, and in England it marked the beginning of the season during which work was done by candlelight. Later it became an annual festivity held in summer by the employees of a printing establishment. It usually consisted of a dinner and an excursion into the country.

The word is now obsolete and its origin obscure: but a dinner and toasts and songs and recitations and two piano solos (first item, English Airs; second, Scotch Airs) comprised the programme at the Government Printing Office's waygoose of October 1867. Whether goose was served and whether an excursion to the country preceded it is not recorded; but the toasts were loyal, the songs martial, sentimental, or nostalgic.

According to a later report, these affairs became quite an institution in the Department. The annual "wayze goose" (a third spelling) held on 8 November 1879 received a full-page report "From our correspondent" in the *Colonial Printers' Register*.<sup>1</sup> It was held at McNab's Gardens, Lower Hutt; the weather was "simply splendid . . . making a trip into the country very enjoyable"; the presence, for the first time, "of a goodly number of the fair sex" made the day a great success and restricted the drinking, reports our correspondent. Over 200 attended, travelling by train in special carriages with free passes for the day, accompanied by a brass band. They admired the gardens, played cricket and rounders, competed in the sports events, and danced "*ad lib*". That evening 45 "comps" attended "the inevitable dinner" at the Commercial Hotel, George Didsbury in the chair. A round of toasts brought the evening to a close: "As it now wanted but a few minutes to 12 o'clock, the company rose and . . . trilled out a stave of 'Auld Lang Syne,' mutually agreeing that a more enjoyable evening had never been spent. . . ."

No further description is necessary. The picnics of later years were held at Rona Bay, Days Bay, and at Maidstone Park, Upper Hutt; the interbranch tug-o'-war seems to have been a popular event, teams competing for a challenge shield. The Department's fiftieth picnic, held at Maidstone Park on 28 January 1930, was commemorated with a special "Golden Jubilee Picnic" souvenir programme. A Punch and Judy show, a three-hour programme of sports events, and a free distribution of toys to the children filled a memorable day that ended with dancing to music played by a cabaret orchestra. The Printing Office staff certainly took its pleasures seriously.

<sup>1</sup> 15 December 1879, p. 39. Copy held by Alexander Turnbull Library.



*"Margaret"*

On the move of the waste-paper depot in 1953 from the old tin shed at the rear of the main building to premises in Thorndon Quay, the office cats were deprived of a home. One of these, Margaret, acquired a reputation for maternal devotion when her new-born kittens were unknowingly entombed in a bale of waste paper and dispatched to the paper mill in Dunedin. Margaret expressed concern while the bale was being pressed and sewn and travelled with it by truck and coastal ship to Dunedin. On arrival at the paper mill the bale was opened in her presence to reveal the bodies of her four kittens. Margaret then returned to Wellington, installing herself once more amongst the waste paper after an absence of nearly two weeks.

## *Chapter 14*

### THE NEW PRINTING OFFICE

THE contract for the new Government Printing Office at the corner of Thorndon Quay and Mulgrave Street was let in October 1960. The new building comprises five floors and a basement; it cost over £1,000,000, and provides 150,000 sq. ft. of working space. It will house 450 employees.

The site was formerly occupied by the Department's addressograph and duplicating service and by a number of old houses. Before these buildings could be demolished suitable accommodation had to be found for their tenants; the Addressograph Branch went to the Griffin Building in Molesworth Street, formerly occupied by the Department of Maori Affairs. The preparation of detailed plans and specifications, under the direction of the Government Architect, was carried out while the site was being cleared. There were inevitable delays in finding alternative accommodation for some of the tenants, and further delays when the steep banks at the rear of the site subsided after a period of persistent rain.

Construction work on the new building began early in 1961. As with most modern buildings, a great deal of work was required below ground level. With heavy, fast-moving presses to be accommodated and a considerable dead weight of paper and lead, the foundations and supporting columns of the new building had to be constructed to withstand enormous strains. The irregular contours of the site also added to the amount of excavation work necessary.<sup>1</sup>

At this stage the building made slow progress. The Printing Office commuters on the Hutt Valley electric units would sometimes speculate gloomily on the chances of the job being finished by the date specified in the contract, April 1964. It was soon obvious that the forecast had been far too optimistic.

Seen from the air the new building would look not unlike the top of a capital T, with the vertical stroke sliced off near the top at an angle. The cap of the T faces west along Mulgrave Street and

<sup>1</sup>In shape the site is trapezoidal, with no two of its sides parallel.

is 276 ft long; the oblique base runs parallel with Thorndon Quay on the east. The main entrance faces the end of Aitken Street, a skip and a jump from Parliament Buildings; and because Mulgrave Street is 30 ft higher than Thorndon Quay at the north end of the building, this entrance opens on to the second floor.

The building stands on the fringe of the proposed Government Centre, undoubtedly the proper place for the Government Printing Office. It consists of two units: the main building, a rectangular block containing a basement and five floors, and a two-storey annexe (the vertical stroke of the T), which projects out to the east side and ends obliquely along Thorndon Quay. Its total area, including mezzanine floors in the toilet areas, is 194,000 sq. ft. Its maximum height from Thorndon Quay, excluding the penthouse on its roof, is 82 ft.

The walls are of reinforced concrete, with the floors specially designed to carry the weight of heavy, fast-moving machines. These are arranged so that work flows smoothly from one process to another. The floors have been planned so that new machines and new processes can be introduced with the minimum of structural alteration – an important point in this industry of constantly improving techniques. Work moves logically from one department to another: from the planners and copy supervisors on the fourth floor, through the typesetting, composing, and blockmaking sections on the third floor, to the letterpress printing machines on the second floor, down to the bindery on the first floor, and through to the packing and dispatch department on the ground floor. Paper and publications stores, maintenance workshops, and general bulk stores occupy the basement.<sup>1</sup>

Two heavy goods lifts at each end of the building operate between the basement and the third floor, while two passenger lifts, two smaller goods lifts, and a special formes lift provide communication between floors. A pneumatic dispatch tube system connects the production control sections on the fourth floor with the factory floors and basement. Fork-lift trucks will convey their heavy loads of bulk paper by goods lift to the letterpress machines.

From the outside, the windows on all but the top floor appear to be rather small, but this is done with a reason. For men working fast machines, bright sunlight can be a dangerous hazard: a moment's temporary blindness when a worker is dazzled by light reflected from a polished metal surface could cause severe injury. In any case, daylight can penetrate only a short distance into the width of the building. Other distractions that windows present – a harbour

<sup>1</sup>In 1963 the Department employed the services of a firm of industrial consultants to study the proposed layout of the new Printing Office.



view, passing pedestrians, traffic, pretty girls – have been known to cause accidents through inattention to the job on hand: a guillotine, for example, requires its operator's full attention.

The building is finished externally with floor-to-floor precast concrete panels faced with white Takaka marble chips. The administrative offices on the fourth floor are glazed from floor to ceiling; the penthouses on the roof are faced with ribbed aluminium. Bookshelves and display cases in the main administrative offices and entrance lobbies will display a selection of the Department's publications, most of which are available from the publications shop on the second floor.

### *Modern Entrance*

This shop is strategically placed inside the main entrance on Mulgrave Street. A cantilevered, spar-varnished wooden awning of modern design (it has been likened to a raised drawbridge) provides shelter for the entrance. Ribbed aluminium louvres screen floor-to-ceiling windows at each side of the entrance doors, and inside the foyer glass and aluminium provide a spacious setting for the Government bookshop and the main inquiry desk. Open wooden stairs give access to a glass mezzanine display area above the foyer and to the floors above; but the main stairways, at either end of the building, are of concrete, with terrazzo floors and treads. Two passenger lifts on the far side of the foyer are set in an attractive mosaic panel which covers the whole wall.

On the top floor a narrow balcony surrounds the building. Well-lit offices provide accommodation for the Government Printer and his senior staff, for the copy supervisors and computers, and for the "front office" – Accounts have the harbour view. The conference room has a cork-tiled floor and modern strip panelling on the walls; two interview rooms also provide a facility long needed.

Sound-proofed rooms for the type-setting and mono-casting machines are a feature of the third-floor accommodation, shared mainly by the operators and compositors. Security rooms enable confidential work to be kept secret to the staff engaged on it, and raised offices for the overseers facilitate supervision. A surprising feature on this floor is the view. The windows, small to outward appearance, are more than adequate. Fume extractors are installed in some of these rooms.

The letterpress printing machinery fills most of the second floor, and the bindery and cafeteria most of the first floor. Each floor contains separate cooking facilities – an electric stove, stainless steel sinks, and a hot-water heater – for the night staff; showers and

locker rooms are installed on the three main floors. A lecture room next to the cafeteria will be used for instruction courses and apprentice training.

The colour scheme for the lower floors has been chosen to give light in large rooms lit mainly by artificial light. The walls and columns are painted in pastel shades of grey, green, and blue, with sections of buff-coloured chipboard to provide contrast. Exterior decoration includes a large abstract design on the Thorndon Quay front, concrete slab fence-panels and a kerbside garden along the Mulgrave Street frontage, and a rock garden against the retaining wall along the north side of the building. The building was completed in July 1966.



With the completion of its new building, the Government Printing Office makes an auspicious beginning to its second century. From a staff of 10 setting type by hand in two rooms and a basement, the Printing Office has grown to become the largest printing establishment in New Zealand. Its staff now numbers over 900; its annual turnover exceeds £2½ million. Its productions range in size from railway tickets and luggage labels to the *New Zealand Official Yearbook* of about 1,270 pages. Machines set the records and make the statistics; but it is the skill of men and women working together in common cause that makes a printing office. Their raw materials are paper and ink; their skills and their teamwork, the foresight and planning of controlling officers and management, the synchronisation of a host of different processes and operations combine to produce the parliamentary papers and reports, the Bills and statutes, the textbooks and telephone directories, the official forms and railway timetables, and the thousands of other jobs that each year bear the Government Printer's imprint. The Government Printing Office can be proud of all it has achieved in its first 100 years.

## GOVERNMENT PRINTERS

Joseph L. Wilson	12 May 1864 to 31 March 1865
George Didsbury	1 April 1865 to 20 April 1893
Samuel Costall	1 June 1893 to 15 May 1896
John Mackay	15 June 1896 to 15 May 1916
Marcus F. Marks	1 July 1916 to 31 May 1922
W. A. G. Skinner	1 June 1922 to 31 May 1933
G. H. Loney	1 June 1933 to 31 July 1937
E. V. Paul	1 August 1937 to 31 March 1949
R. E. Owen	20 June 1949 to date

## OVERSEERS

G. Didsbury	1 August 1864 to 31 March 1865
J. Costall	1 April 1865 to c. 8 April 1892 <sup>1</sup>

## SUPERINTENDING OVERSEERS

J. Burns	1892 to 1901
J. J. Gamble	1901 to 1905
J. F. Rogers	1 April 1905 to 31 December 1908
W. A. G. Skinner	1 January 1909 to 31 May 1922 <sup>2</sup>

## SUPERINTENDENTS

G. H. Loney	1 June 1922 to 31 May 1933
J. May	21 June 1933 to 18 January 1944
J. E. Wilson	19 January 1944 to June 1949

## WORKS MANAGERS

W. A. Baker	10 June 1949 to 31 March 1953
A. R. Shearer	1 April 1953 to 31 March 1966 <sup>3</sup>
L. V. McGann	1 April 1966 to date.

<sup>1</sup>As the establishment grew larger, overseers were appointed in the various branches and James Costall became Superintending Overseer.

<sup>2</sup>In 1912 the title of this appointment was changed to Superintendent.

<sup>3</sup>Mr Shearer was appointed Deputy Government Printer on 1 April 1966.



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R. E. OWEN, GOVERNMENT PRINTER,  
WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND—1966

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